THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL

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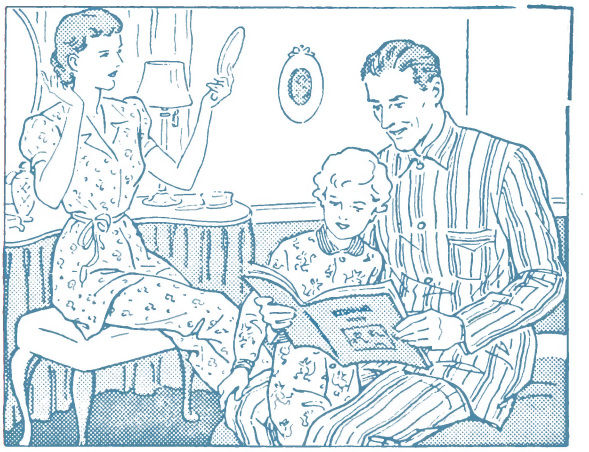

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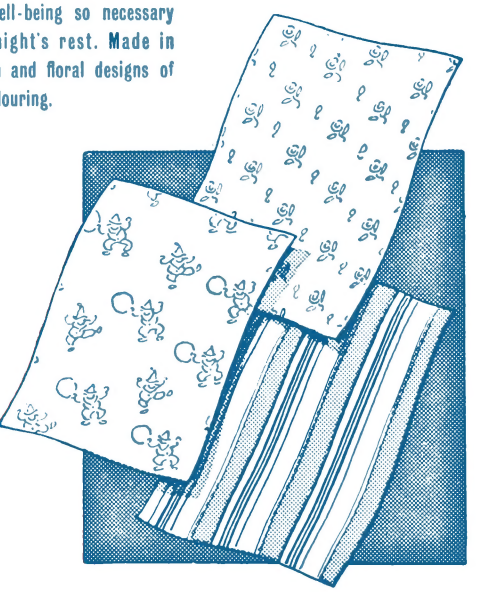

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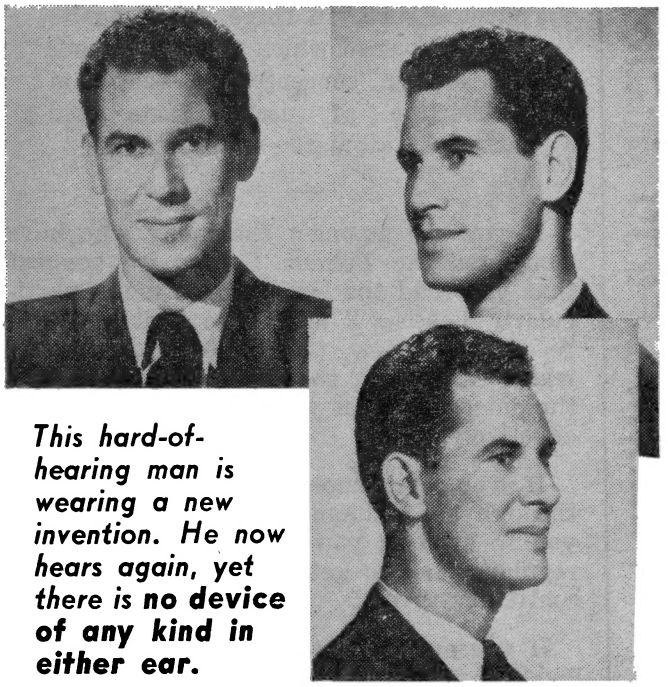

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Among the Critics.

Thanks to Dale Collins.

A.K.C. (Vic.): I would like to send a few lines to thank you and Mr. Dale Collins for what is going to be, I feel sure, a treat in store for many of your readers, viz., "a number of stories based on Biblical themes." Prophecy is something not really understood until it is being, or has been, fulfilled, but many students of "The Good Book" are seeing things happening these days that leaves little doubt in the minds of thoughtful people that we are in "the last days" foretold so long ago. Among the leaders of our nations "men's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming on the earth," and the chaotic state of this poor old world is making many folks turn to the only "Book" in the world that can explain, comfort and help. I am sure that numbers of your readers will enjoy having their memories refreshed by a gifted man like Mr. Dale Collins bringing to their minds, memories and incidents of these immortal tales inspired by long-treasured memories of the greatest Book. I feel sure that in Dale Collins you HAVE found the ideal man, for only a man with sincerely religious convictions could write a story like "The Kitten Sphinx" and portray that theme with the reverence and dignity that Mr. Collins has invested it with. I feel sure, too, that most of your readers appreciate and enjoy the "true life" stories that are appearing in your journal. There is an old saying, "Fact is stranger than fiction," and in the wonderful experiences related in "The White South," "Ocean Without Shores," "The Wingless Victory," and others, we see that exemplified, and feel proud of the heroic men and deeds told in such a fascinating way. "Father and I Were Ranchers" will be popular too, I guess. Keep up your good work. "The Australian Journal" is not ONE of the best of its kind, it is, without doubt, THE best, so here's wishing it will long continue with its good stories.

Off with the Artist's Head!

P.F. (Q'ld.): I have often thought I would like to write and have my say in the Critic's Pages, and your cover picture on your April issue has caused me to do so. In answer to N.N. (Vic.), who said the cover picture should be all Australian, you remark that the cover picture on the April issue was painted in Australia by an Australian artist, which should be Australian enough for anyone. Well, the picture might not be so bad if it did not concern a story inside the magazine, but it does, and it's the story which makes the picture ridiculous. For a start, the artist has drawn the wagon with great heavy wheels like an old bullock wagon. And also it is carrying an enormous load which, together with the weight of the vehicle, and travelling over probably trackless and sandy country, it would need about a dozen draught horses in the team to pull it. But, no, this one is drawn by what look like two very light saddle hacks, and besides that, the more ridiculous assumption that a thing like that could be floated across a flooded river by just tying a piece of canvas around it like a dilly bag. Actually, it would need a boat beneath it like Noah's Ark. Also, the drawings of the blacks, in my opinion, are very poor. For instance, blacks who are only hunting for food, do not paint themselves with clay as they are in the picture. As far as I know, that is only used when at war with another tribe or during corroborees, and I am sure that the short curly hair of the Australian Abo could not be tied up in a top-knot which resembles the top of a coconut palm. In fact, the only happy thing about the picture is that the blacks put the two unfortunate horses out of their misery by spearing them. Another unlikely part of the story is that a fair dinkum "Aussie" bushman was unable to swim. Well, that should be enough criticism for once. As for your stories, I have no complaints. They are nearly all well worth reading, and the serials are usually excellent.

Perhaps the horses in the picture were a bit light, but it mustn't be forgotten that the man in Mr. Mentiplay's story was right up against it and probably used whatever horses he could get. However, the wagon is the type used at that period, big wheels and all, and it could be floated across a river if the water could be prevented from entering it, although, of course, it wouldn't float long. Actually Hume and Hovell crossed the Murray in just that fashion. As for the blacks, our artist asserts that they are authentic for some of the tribes of that day, despite their top-knots and war-paint. It might be difficult to find a bushman nowadays who could not swim, but we've met them, and on the very banks of the Murray, too! Our critic has forgotten that, at that time, swimming, like reading and writing, was by no means a common art.

Sorry, but we don't quite follow.

S.J.C. (N.S.W.): We have been reading your most wonderful magazine for only twelve months and I was informed once not to judge a book by its cover. I adopted this advice when I stumbled on to a copy of Lord Lytton in a second-hand shop in Sydney, so perhaps you might take a little advice if only to satisfy one reader, and that is, just print the map of Australia on every cover of your magazine. We do enjoy nature stories like the Steel-Head Trout, etc., etc., they do show up our love for the destruction of Nature.

"The trouble with your plots is that they seem to be directed mainly against the reader."

On Behalf of King James.

It may seem a little late to take up the defence of a monarch who died three hundred years ago, but a letter from Mrs. G. Beckett, of St. Kilda, Vic., prompts us to a few words on behalf of James I, the King whose accession to the throne united England and Scotland after centuries of strife.

In an editorial note referring to Dale Collins' story, "The Kitten Sphinx," we spoke of James as "the student king," a phrase to which Mrs. Beckett takes strong exception. "From my knowledge of him by reading history," she writes, "he was nothing but an over-padded, superstitious, dribbling half-wit, whose main occupation seemed to have been the hunting and killing of witches."

Admittedly, the successor to Queen Elizabeth I had his weak points. So did every monarch of his time. Whether he was over-padded we do not know, but, if so, it seems a harmless personal idiosyncrasy. He is reputed to have been extremely simple, if not actually careless, in his dress, and he was certainly very satirical at the expense of the court fops of the period, whose affectations he could not tolerate.

Undoubtedly he was superstitious. So was everyone at that time. In fact, both high and low, learned and illiterate, had what is to us an astonishing belief in ghosts, demons, omens, astrology and magic of all kinds.

Nor were the inhabitants of the British Isles the only people to be afraid of witches. The early American colonists were just as scared of old ladies who rode about on broomsticks as they were of Red Indians. One of the first things the Pilgrim Fathers did was pass a law against witchcraft, for which the penalty was death, and some of the cruellest and most terrible witch-hunts took place in New England.

At that period, the expectation of life was short and few men lived long enough to develop chronic complaints, but James was almost sixty before he died, which would be the equivalent of at least seventy-five nowadays. As he grew old and ill, he developed physical infirmities which rendered him socially unpleasant, but which modern medical treatment could have relieved. For instance, for many years, he suffered from pyorrhea, which was so far beyond the scope of his doctors that they were unaware of its existence. A good dentist might have changed James' whole life, but one could scarcely condemn him for having been born before modern dental science, any more than for having lived in an age of witch-hunting and superstition.

Some historians have dealt harshly with James, but it must be remembered that he was a Scot, and therefore a foreigner in the England of that day. Scots were not over-popular in the country with which they had been at war, off and on, for centuries.

Moreover when he came to London to ascend the throne, a great many of his countrymen followed him, to encounter all the usual prejudices. Their accent was mimicked, their attire was ridiculed, their poverty was sneered at, their manners were regarded as uncouth, and it was the general belief that they had come south only to enrich themselves at the expense of the English. Opinions of the Scots were therefore by no means unbiassed, especially when recorded by writers who for any reason had a personal animus against the Stuarts. Party politics and religious opinions entered deeply into this. The first writers against James, such as Burnet, Harris, Catherine Macauley and Horace Walpole, were all animated by the spirit of hostility, and it was from these authors that many later historians took their cue, regardless of truth or justice, so that he has come to us as a very unpleasant personality.

What can be said to the credit of James Stuart? First, that he was a good deal better than most men of his time. Scotsman though he was, he was the champion of the English language. Until his day, most learned and philosophical works had been written in Latin and Greek, but James, although profoundly versed in both those tongues, advised and encouraged writers to use English, and it was at his command that the Authorised Version of the Bible was prepared to fix the form of the English tongue for all time.

An author himself, he was one of the most learned men in his kingdom; in fact, Lord Bolingbroke once remarked that "he hath more learning than doth become a king." Unfortunately, His Lordship did not say exactly how much learning he considered proper for a monarch.

In his prime he was regarded as one of the best orators of his time; the historian Hume, though not overfavourable to James in other matters, admits that "His Majesty will be found superior to the speaker in every parliament during this reign." Even his enemies admitted that he was an amusing conversationalist, one of the most malicious of them being forced to declare that "he was very witty, and had as many witty jests as any man living; at which he would not smile himself, but de-

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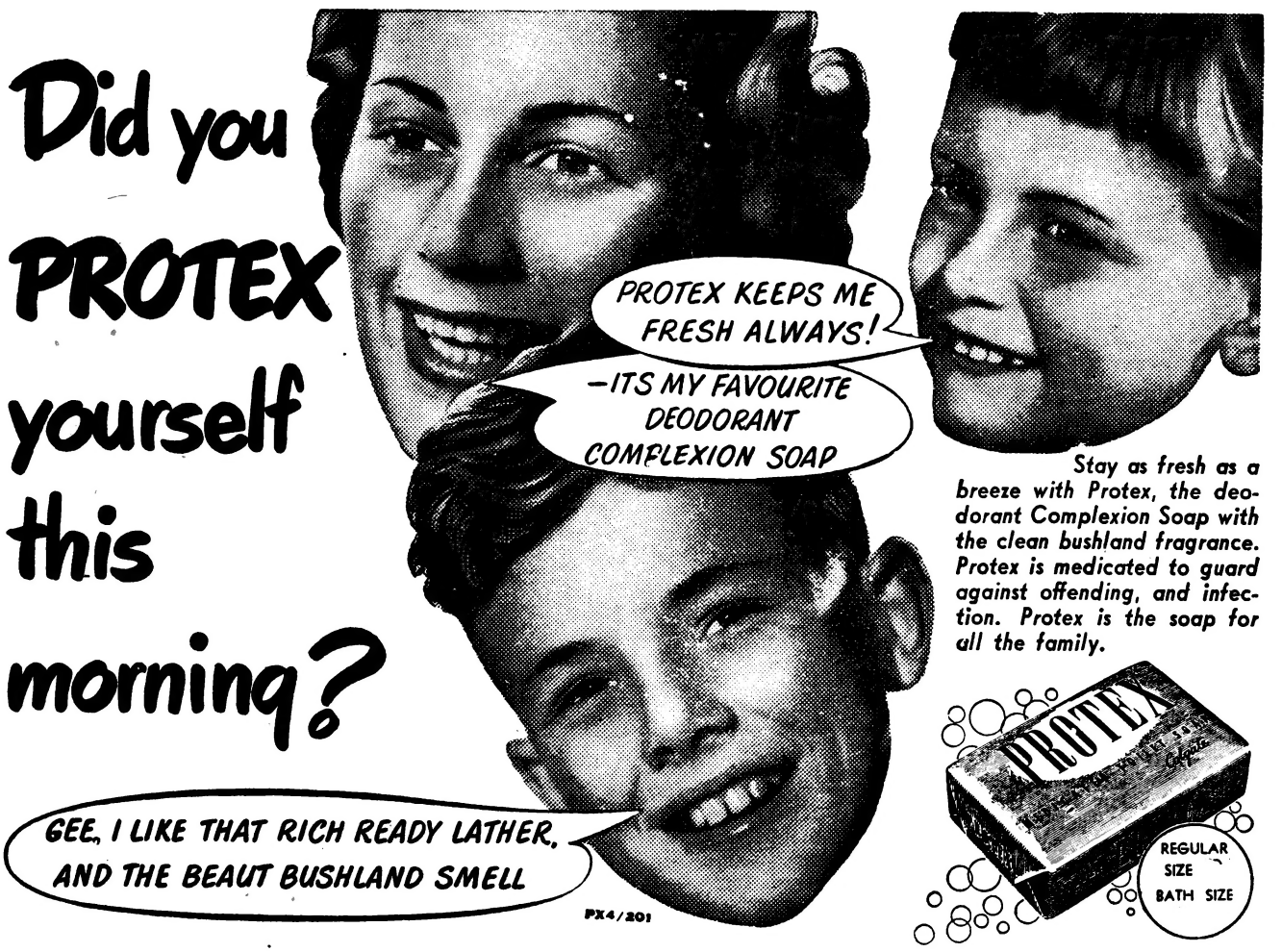
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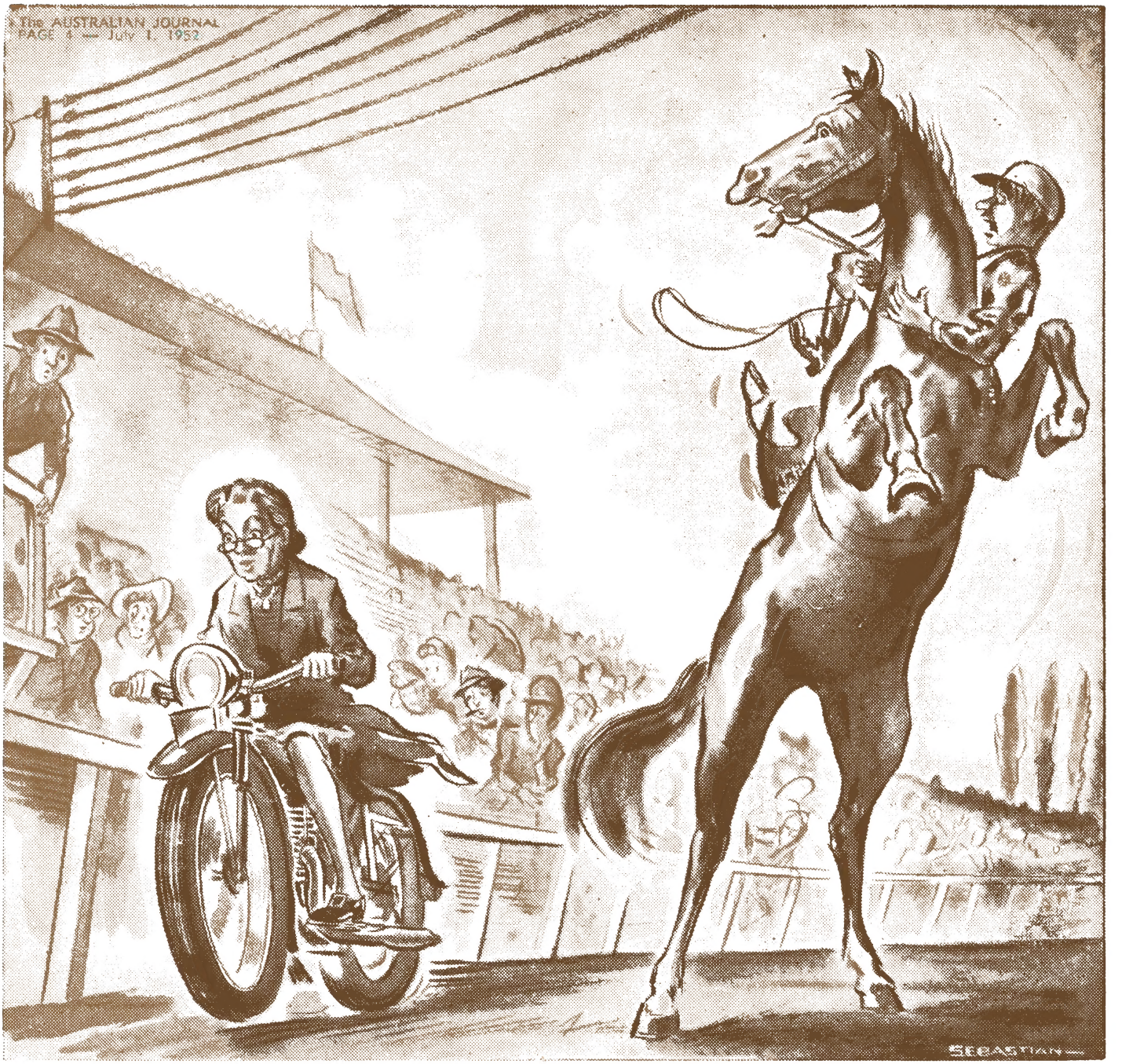

Mrs. Manning and the Motor-Bike

"ONE more nod," mused Mrs. Manning, "and I'll be off to sleep."

She roused herself and sat up straight in the rocking chair. In the valley below her, the quiet Australian cathedral town under the influence of a fine Saturday morning in early summer, seemed to have no compunction about the matter.

"But then," said Mrs. Manning aloud to herself, "it never was very wide awake.

Over the railing of the back porch she could now see the fair head of her grandson. He was kneeling on an old square of canvas. The component parts of his motor bike were littered around him. Mrs. Manning watched him until she could not contain her curiosity a moment longer.

She stood up, stepped briskly down the steps and across the lawn. John was so engrossed with what he was doing that he was totally unaware of his grandmother's presence. Mrs. Manning waited for at least ten seconds. Then she tapped him sharply on the head.

Startled, he looked up and gave her a grin that gleamed through the smears of oil and grease.

"Just what are you doing?" Mrs. Manning asked.

John held up the part he had been cleaning. "Look at this carburettor, Gran. See what a beautiful piece of work it is?"

Mrs. Manning gestured at the scattered innards of the engine. "If something is wrong with it, you take it back this instant. You only bought it last week, so surely

If you've ever ridden a motor-cycle you'll know why Mrs. Manning liked it. It's the easiest thing in the world—you just kick this, turn that, open the throttle and away you go!

By ELDRED G. WHITE

they would give you another one."

"I don't want another one. This one's fine."

John flashed his grandmother a teasing grin.

"Then why," Mrs. Manning was baffled, "have you taken it to pieces?"

"I want to see what makes it tick."

"H'm," said Mrs. Manning. "That word reminds me of something. The kitchen clock gave its last tick a week back. You were going to fix it last Saturday. Remember?"

"Ah, yes," John replied easily. "I'll get round to it one of these days."

"You'd better do it to-morrow at the latest, young man. Your mother was late for the shop this morning. She'd forgotten it had stopped."

"Why didn't she put the radio on?"

"You know Julia doesn't care for commercials with her breakfast. And also she'd forgotten to wind her wrist watch."

"How that dame holds down the job of managing a jewellery store beats me," said John frankly.

"In my youth——" Mrs. Manning began.

"Children did not speak of their parents in that manner," John finished for her and they laughed together.

Mrs. Manning thought again how much she liked her grandson. "Do you think," she said touching one of the parts with the toe of her shoe, "that you'll ever get it together again?"

"Can't say for sure. But if I have no pieces left over, I guess she'll go O.K."

"It looks very interesting," Mrs. Manning said in a tentative way.

John shot her a suspicious glance. "What are you trying to do, Gran? Make idle conversation?"

"Certainly not!" Mrs. Manning denied. "I think it is all very fascinating." She picked up the magneto with both her hands. It was smeared with grease. Unthinkingly she put one hand to her cheek. "What's the name of this thing?"

John saw the result of her action but said nothing.

"That's the magneto."

"And this thing?"

John patiently named several parts for her. Then he said, "Listen, Gran. It's not much use me telling you the names of these. They don't mean anything. If you're really interested it would be far better if I told you how they work."

Mrs. Manning smiled and settled herself comfortably on a box. "Go ahead," she invited. "I've always had a desire to know just how an internal combustion engine works. You needn't look at me like that. Your grandmother isn't in her dotage yet. Although the Tidmouths one, two and three are always telling me I am."

JOHN started with the instruction. As he put the engine together he explained the function of each part. Mrs. Manning sat chin on hand, grease smear on cheek, absorbed. And John, to his surprise, found that she was quick at learning. When he reflected on this he realised that it was not so strange. She had always taken an intelligent interest in his activities from as far back as he could remember. She used to fix his toy railway for him when he was knee-high to a grasshopper. He knew too, that maybe she had spoiled him in this way. Would he ever find again such an eager, devoted listener?

The faint ringing of the phone in the house interrupted the lesson. They let it ring, but the person calling apparently knew that someone was home and was determined to get an answer.

"I'm not expecting any calls," John said pointedly.

"If it is for you I shall hang up," his grandmother retorted getting to her feet.

When Mrs. Manning lifted the receiver Julia's office voice, cool and incisive, came over the wire.

"Mother, what have you been doing? Is anything wrong?"

Mrs. Manning thought she sensed an odd note in her daughter's voice. A guarded note as if someone was standing at her elbow. "I have been learning to ride John's motor bike," and Mrs. Manning chuckled as she caught the repressed gasp at the other end.

Julia decided to ignore this remark. "Mr. Lawson has called in to look over the store and I was wondering if . . ."

"Not Lawson of Lawson's chain jewellery stores?" Mrs. Manning asked. "Not the big boss himself?"

"And I was wondering, mother, if you would mind me inviting him home to lunch."

"Of course I don't mind, Julia. What time shall I expect you?"

"About half past one. Just a moment."

Mrs. Manning heard a muttered conversation and then Julia continued, "Mr. Lawson has asked me to thank you."

"That's very gentlemanly of him," said Mrs. Manning. "I wonder what he will say after lunch?"

"We will have to come straight back to the store, as Mr. Lawson wants to be on his way again sometime this afternoon." Julia was successfully ignoring her mother's little sallies.

"That's all right with me, dear. By the way, is he married?"

"Er—no." Then in a low, hurried voice Julia went on, "Mother, do behave yourself. And please see that John gets cleaned up. I know what he's like after tinkering all morning with that bike. You do realise how important it is to me that I make a good impression on him, don't you? So please restrain yourself."

"Julia," said her mother in a soothing voice, "I shall be the very soul of discretion."

"Oh dear!" said Julia. "I have to go now. Good-bye, mother." And the phone clicked dead.

When Mrs. Manning reappeared John enquired cheerfully, "Wrong number?"

"It was your mother."

John frowned. A mid-morning call on Saturday invariably presaged some unwelcome duty.

"Julia's as much your daughter as she is my mother," he said darkly. "Why do you always seem to make her my responsibility?"

"Well, isn't she?"

"In a way I suppose she is. But it's about time some guy took her off our hands. She's not at all bad looking; she has a nice taste in dress and a certain charm."

"Julia would be very pleased to hear you speak of her in such a complimentary manner. That's high praise indeed, coming from a son."

"Can't you do something about it, Gran?"

"I've tried."

"When?"

"Remember Mr. Osborne, the butcher?"

John gave a whoop of joy and rolled on the grass. "You don't call that a try, do you? Six red headed kids and a bay window!"

"Butchering is a good business and a widow can't afford to be too choosey. Anyway, she's bringing Mr. Lawson, her boss, home for lunch."

"Is that the old geezer with the beard and moustaches whose photo hangs on the wall of her office?"

"I should think so."

"I wonder if he expects us to provide a moustache cup or does he carry his own?"

"I'm prepared to meet that problem if it arises," Mrs. Manning said loftily. "After you've cleaned up and changed both your shirt and your trousers, you'll find a moustache cup in that old china cupboard stacked in the attic. It was your great-grandfather's."

In John's blue eyes an imp of mischief danced that was the twin of the sparkle in his grandmother's eyes.

"You will have to behave yourself," Mrs. Manning warned.

"You speak for yourself," John retorted.

"Well, there's plenty of time yet. Let's get back to the motor bike. What speed can you get out of it?"

"About eighty."

"Eighty miles an hour? That's not very fast."

"It is on a motor bike," John defended.

Mrs. Manning smiled and John caught the tail end of it. "Why you . . ." he lifted his

hand. "I ought to take a sock at you for making fun of me."

"I certainly caught you that time," Mrs. Manning said with satisfaction. "How do you start it?"

"It's easy." John straddled the bike. "Turn the petrol on. Put it into neutral—see? Then you put your foot on the starter like this."

The quiet morning was broken by the throbbing of the engine. "Here's your throttle," John shouted. "Now put the clutch in, move into first gear, clutch out and—" John circled the lawn. "Think you've got the idea?"

Mrs. Manning repeated his instructions precisely.

"There's no doubt about you, Gran. You're as smart as a tack."

"Thank you, John." Mrs. Manning was ridiculously elated by his praise. "Now give me a go."

John's jaw dropped. "You mean—you actually want to ride it?"

"By all means. I'll have you know, young man, that I used to ride a push bike long after you were born."

"Well . . ." said John doubtfully. "It's not quite the same thing."

"Why not? I should think it would be much easier. You don't have to pedal this."

Mrs. Manning tucked up her skirt in a business-like fashion and straddled the bike. John realised that he would be wasting his breath. He started the engine and ran round the lawn holding the saddle as his grandmother steered.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Manning triumphantly. "I told you . . ."

The noon hooter at the railway cut off her remark.

"Goodness me!" she cried. "Twelve o'clock and nothing done. Now, you clean up this yard, John."

"But, Gran, old Lawson's not likely to come out here."

"Never mind. For all we know, he might be the kind of person who judges people by their backyards. And don't forget to clean yourself up."

"You've got oil all over your face, Gran. I wasn't going to tell you, but I thought you might want to impress the old boy yourself," John said and ducked.

JULIA inserted her front door key with some trepidation. She breathed an imperceptible sigh of relief when she ushered Mr. Lawson into the long, pleasant lounge room. Two bright and shining faces rose from the window seat and came to greet them. But when they saw the visitor clearly the faces became puzzled.

"This is Mr. Lawson, mother. And this is my son, John," Julia introduced them.

"Thank you for having me to lunch," said Mr. Lawson. He was middle-aged and completely normal in appearance. His voice was deep and his handclasp firm.

"But I thought — we expected to see . . ." Mrs. Manning's voice trailed off.

"Yes," said John, staring. "Where's your beard?"

"My what?" Mr. Lawson glanced bewilderedly at Julia. Her heart sank. Oh dear! What devilment were they up to now? "Where's my what?" Mr. Lawson repeated bluntly.

John's reply came with a rush. "Your beard and moustache. Have you had them shaved off?" He was patently disappointed and suspicious.

Julia shook her head as Mr. Lawson looked inquiringly at her once again.

"That photograph of you hanging in Julia's office," Mrs. Manning explained.

"That's my father," Mr. Lawson began to chuckle.

John and Mrs. Manning burst out laughing and Julia laughed, too, with nervous relief.

"I even sent John up to the attic to get his great-grandfather's moustache cup," gasped Mrs. Manning.

IT was a delightful lunch. Julia relaxed when she found that her mother and her son liked the visitor. And when those two chose to be charming they could be very charming indeed. Mr. Lawson made things merrier by insisting on trying the moustache cup.

Inevitably the conversation veered round to motor bikes. Mr. Lawson was dogmatic on the subject. He insisted that they were abominable things —a menace to life and limb. John, of course, defended them with spirit. Mrs. Manning supported him, but when the argument became a little heated she whisked them into a less controversial topic and managed to maintain the conversation on a lighthearted plane.

Mr. Lawson happened to notice hanging on the wall a large photograph of a young woman sitting side-saddle on a magnificent hack.

"That's Gran all right," John said. "She was the champion lady rider of the district for donkey's ages."

"I am now several donkey's ages old," said Mrs. Manning. "My grandson has such refined expressions at times. That photo was taken before Julia was born. That reminds me. Would you care to see some photos of Julia as a baby, Mr. Lawson?"

"I know just where they are," John said eagerly.

Mr. Lawson glanced uncertainly at Julia. Julia rose quickly. She knew the photographs that her mother had in mind. They revealed her in various poses of chubby nudity.

"I think that if you wish to be on your way this afternoon, we'd better be getting back to the shop. We still have a lot of work to get through."

Mr. Lawson grinned but rose with appreciable alacrity. "Yes," he agreed with a touch of regret. "Perhaps some other time, Mrs. Manning."

"Do you have to work on such a lovely afternoon?" Mrs. Manning asked. "Is the work so urgent that you haven't time to see our beautiful little city?"

"Why, no, I don't suppose it is that urgent."

"But, mother, Mr. Lawson has made arrangements to go to-night," Julia interposed.

"The trouble with your generation, Julia, is that you're in such a hurry to get somewhere, heaven knows where, that you never take time off to enjoy yourselves in a leisurely, satisfying way," Mrs. Manning rejoined warmly.

Mr. Lawson grinned. "I think your mother has something there. My plans are really very elastic. I can stay till Monday. Would you care to come for a drive with us, Mrs. Manning?"

"Oh, no. Thank you but I have to go visiting this afternoon," Mrs. Manning lied hastily.

Mr. Lawson looked genuinely disappointed.

"But you must come back to tea," she invited.

"I would like to," he replied.

As Mr. Lawson went down the steps, Mrs. Manning caught her daughter's eye and gave her a slow wink. John put his thumbs up in approval.

Julia flushed and hurried down to the red convertible.

"She looks very becoming when she blushes," said Mrs. Manning.

John agreed.

"It's a pity he's not staying for a week or more," she went on.

"Oh, I don't know. If he saw some of the crazy things you do he might sheer off."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Manning. "I think he has a sense of humour."

"He'd need it. Now listen, Gran," John said with a rapid change of tone, "I've got a radical proposition to make to you."

"What is it?" Mrs. Manning asked warily.

"Billy Watson wants me to check the timing on his car. And I'm a bit late now."

"You're going to leave me the dishes?"

"I'll make it up to you to-night."

"All right then. Off with you."

The words were hardly out of her mouth when John was sprinting down the drive and his long legs carried him over the front hedge in one great, youthful bound.

"Oh my goodness!" Mrs. Manning exclaimed. "I forgot to tell him to change his clothes."

AFTER she had tidied up, Mrs. Manning went from room to room oddly restless and at a loss to know what to do with herself. The house was strangely silent and still after all the talk and laughter at lunch. She stood for a time gazing at the photograph of herself that Mr. Lawson had admired. He was, she thought, a very attractive bachelor and just the right age for Julia. And John liked him too, which was very important. She sighed a little and wandered out to the back lawn.

The motor bike was leaning against the garage door where John had left it. Its chrome work gleamed in the sun, a tribute to his loving care.

Mrs. Manning regarded it pensively. She took hold of the handlebars and balanced it upright. It was a marvellous thing. No doubt about it. All the power wrapped up in that little engine . . .

Now, what was it John had said? Turn the petrol on. There. Put it into neutral. Foot down hard on the starter . . .

The engine burst into life. Why, this is easy as falling off a log. I'll go for a little ride down the drive, she thought recklessly. Throttle, clutch, first gear, clutch out . . . The bike moved down the drive with Mrs. Manning in the saddle . . . Now into second gear . . .

There was no room to turn at the end of the drive, so she just had to continue out on to the road. And besides, in the confined space of the driveway she seemed to be going too fast for comfort. Indeed, if anyone had been observing, Mrs. Manning's debut would have undoubtedly been likened to the popping of a cork from a champagne bottle.

FORTUNATELY the street was straight and had a gentle decline. After the initial surprise and uncertainty, Mrs. Manning began to enjoy herself. All one had to have was a sense of balance and the rest was easy. She thrilled to the throbbing power beneath her.

"I should have done this years ago," she gave a breathless little chuckle. She proceeded along the street until it fed into the main highway. At the junction she negotiated a patch of loose gravel with a hasty prayer and good fortune. A broken yellow line in the centre of the highway pointed to the distant blue hills.

"I never actually knew just what this line was for," Mrs. Manning said to herself as she steered the front wheel on to it. "It's like following the moon's path across the ocean."

The Misses Tidmouth, one, two and three, were taking the afternoon air in their vintage Chevrolet, driven by their aged nephew, Augustus. They were travelling at a sedate fifteen miles per hour when Mrs. Manning chugged by.

After the first incredulous glance there was much confusion in the back seat as the Misses Tidmouth struggled to poke their heads out of the one window.

Augustus received the shock an instant later and the vintage Chevrolet was for one wild moment in danger of running off the road. Augustus fought for control and with, as he kept reiterating until late that night, a masterly effort jammed his foot hard on the brake. The Chevrolet jerked to a halt and with loud cries the Misses Tidmouth tumbled in a heap on the floor.

MRS. MANNING had perceived their surprise and wonder from the corner of her eye and she went on sitting very upright in the saddle. She would have liked to turn and wave to them, but she dared not risk taking her hands from the handlebars.

Merrily she rode along until the road curved. Off the curve in a direct line ahead were the open gates of the racecourse.

Mr. Boddle, the ticket seller and custodian of the gates, stood right in the middle. Mrs. Manning's front wheel aimed straight at him.

Mr. Boddle pulled a ticket and waited, a smile of welcome on his plump features. Suddenly he realised that Mrs. Manning was not going to decrease her speed or swerve from her path.

Mr. Boddle had always been a prudent man. It was a trait that he had nurtured all his life. An awful fear gripped him as Mrs. Manning charged inexorably down on him. Had he left it too late this time? His limbs were paralysed. This can't be happening to me, he thought wildly. With a despairing, strangled cry Mr. Boddle forced himself to leap aside. He lost his balance, and fell. His money bag flew open and coins rolled everywhere in the dust.

How odd of Mr. Boddle, thought Mrs. Manning. But she soon forgot him. Other problems were coming up fast.

It struck Mrs. Manning that she did not know how to stop the bike. And instantly the machine changed its character from a friendly, tractable toy to a roaring, uncontrollable monster.

Mrs. Manning clung desperately to the monster's back as it bumped across the rough turf towards the white rail fence. A group of people opened up for Mrs. Manning and miraculously they had been obscuring a gap in the fence.

SHE found herself on the course proper, and rode up the straight past the grandstand. The course curved gradually and she had no great difficulty in guiding the bike. The shouting of the bookmakers was hushed as she passed by.

The horses were lined across the track ready for the start of a six-furlong race, their hindquarters to the approaching Mrs. Manning. The starter in his stand gave one amazed look and made a snap decision. He hit the lever and the wire barrier flew up.

"Off!" he shouted.

Three of the jockeys caught unawares, screamed curses as their mounts stood flat-footed.

Mrs. Manning remembered that the horn was somewhere on the handlebars. She pressed a button. The horses reared and came down scrabbling to get away. They were upon the rest of the field before the furlong post. One of them, to the bookmakers' dismay, went on to win the race. Mrs. Manning tagged along behind.

"I just can't keep going round and round," she said to herself. "How silly it would look!"

At the point where she had entered the track she made a desperate effort and shot through the opening again. People scattered like chaff in a draught. They shouted at her. Mrs. Manning paid no heed. She was on her way out.

With his legs wide apart, Mr. Boddle was bending down laboriously picking up his money. Mrs. Manning touched the horn again. She had a brief impression of Mr. Boddle's purple face staring at her upside down, between the arch of his legs. Then face and legs disappeared with a piteous, yelping cry and Mrs. Manning rode safely through the gates and headed back to town.

BY now the strain was beginning to tell. Her forearms ached with holding the handlebars too tensely. She came up with the Misses Tidmouth once more. They managed to project their heads out of two windows this time and they shrieked, "What's wrong, Helen?"

Mrs. Manning did not have the strength to shriek back at them.

In their excitement the Misses Tidmouth thumped Augustus on the back. "After her!" they cried, the spirit of the chase entering their blood.

Augustus obediently put his foot on the accelerator. The old sedan leaped forward like an ancient horse startled out of its habitual gait. Steam issued from the radiator.

"She won't stand much of this," Augustus muttered darkly. But he knew better than to ignore the command from the back seat.

Others were caught up in the chase. It began to resemble a hurried procession. An ancient jalopy filled with shouting, delighted teenagers jammed in between a group of young men on push bikes and Augustus.

IT had been a pleasant afternoon for the couple in the red convertible. Julia, Mr. Lawson had been highly gratified to find, was a good companion. She had a good knowledge of the history of the city and though there were not many landmarks of note, she had been able to make them more than ordinarily interesting for him. Glancing sideways at her now, with the wind softly lifting her hair, Mr. Lawson was surprised to feel his heart skip a beat. He was about to comment on this odd happening when his attention was diverted to something ahead of him. He pulled up beside the road.

"You didn't mention anything about a procession," he said.

Julia leant forward. "I didn't know that — oh!" she gasped.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Lawson peered with her. "Why, it looks like your mother on that motor bike!"

"It is," Julia said, grimly.

At the same time as they saw her, Mrs. Manning recognised the red convertible. "Oh dear!" she moaned. Mr. Lawson would think she was a maniac. Poor Julia. How could she explain? How could she possibly pass off this escapade with a light laugh? Mr. Lawson would no doubt have suspicions that all the family were a bit touched in the head.

But there was nothing Mrs. Manning could do about it. She was aboard a juggernaut that carried her inexorably forward. She was too tired to think. All she could manage was to keep the bike upright.

The red convertible slewed round and waited for her to come up.

Mrs. Manning cast all pride away. "I can't stop it," she wailed to Julia.

Julia half-opened the door as if to run after her mother.

"Hold it!" commanded Mr. Lawson. "Here! Take the wheel and catch up with her. Keep to her right."

Julia obeyed numbly. "Not too close," Mr. Lawson directed. He got out on to the running board and tried to give Mrs. Manning an encouraging smile. "Turn left at the next cross street," he shouted.

"I can't!"

"Yes, you can. Take it easy. Wait till I tell you."

The cross street seemed to be upon them all too swiftly for Mrs. Manning.

"Now!" cried Mr. Lawson. "Easy does it."

Blindly she turned the front wheel and Julia turned with her. The cross street was a steep incline. The motor bike chugged slowly up until the engine stalled. The bike wobbled and would have fallen on Mrs. Manning, but Mr. Lawson leapt to the road and seized it.

She climbed thankfully to the ground. It was on the tip of her tongue to thank her rescuer humbly but he spoke first.

"Well," he said cheerfully, but his face was pale. "You just made it."

"Nonsense," she said. "If I hadn't been so fussed at and shouted at I could have gone on for miles."

Suddenly her knees began to tremble and she swayed. Mr. Lawson's arm was quick to support her.

"Mrs. Manning," he said, and over her head his eyes twinkled delightedly at Julia, "you're a wonderful woman. I quite believe you could have." ●

The Flower in the Jungle

By
IAN GORDON

Part One

THE ship had docked at Southampton in pouring rain, and a pathetic little brass band had played jolly music, while the airmen tossed two-anna bits and bottletops down at them from the upper decks. After hours of exasperation, he had escaped on the second of the two London trains.

How green and inviting Hampshire had looked after Mingaladon! Even Brooklands in the rain had seemed glamorous, Waterloo Station enchanting, and the Regent Palace Hotel intoxicatingly naughty.

Would she have changed? Her letters, though perhaps a bit less frequent, seemed as affectionate, as amusing, as one hundred per cent. Eve as they'd always been.

Three years, though. A hell of a time apart — after only six weeks together.

She was coming up to town in the evening. They'd spend the night there, take in a show and a night club or two, and grab a few hours rest before going out to the cottage. They were going to meet in the Regent Palace lounge—the same corner of it that had witnessed the start of their first evening together. It was funny, after three years and a bit of marriage, to be sitting in the same corner, one's pulse alarmingly doubled, waiting.

She'd been late, of course. She always was. In a way he'd have been disappointed if she'd been on time.

It was at the show that the trouble began.

"Enjoying it, darling?" he'd asked.

"Yes, dear. Seen it before, though."

Conversationally, this had lasted them to the interval. And then, in the foyer:

"Yes, Chris, I *have* seen a lot of shows since you were away. No need to be nasty, though. Did you expect me to sit and twiddle my thumbs for three whole years, Chris? We had a war, too, Chris. Did you know that? People getting killed, too. Fellows out for a bit of relaxation. Why, going out with servicemen was a duty. Most of them were damn nice, too."

"All right, darling, I'm sorry. Forget it. Stupid thing to say."

"As a matter of fact, if it hadn't been for you, I had another show lined up for this evening. Just one of the lads from the camp. Just a nice fellow, that's all. That's all, Chris."

And that, as it had turned out, really was all. From an apparently stupid quarrel, the marriage, in a hideous week of misunderstandings, arguments, tears and stand-up fights, had splintered into pieces at his feet. Not bad going, really. Funny, how something that's been part of you for three years can peter out in a week. Just like that. No snuffing out of candles, no putting out of lights, no aching void, just nothing.

At the end of the week they were living apart, and two months after that, Chris, hideously uncomfortable in a Demobilisation pin-stripe, walked up the gangway of the *Carthage*, bound for Bombay. The import and export firm of Lyle and Sturges, Calcutta, though hardly as yet a thriving concern, had progressed from pipe-dream to blue-print. Oliver Sturges, its founder, had wangled himself a posting from Rangoon to Dum Dum, and there, just within reach of Calcutta, he was busily organising the venture in his last few weeks before demobilisation.

Chris had been sceptical of the plan when Oliver put it forward. Army and Air Force messes were full of enthusiastic young Englishmen and Americans, anxious to capitalise on a newly-won knowledge of the East.

"But, I ask you, Chris, have you ever—ever in your whole life—seen such a collection of drips and no-hopers as the Pukkah Sahibs of this town? If they can make a pile out of the country, so can I. Why, they can't even speak the language, half of them. Hey, boy, *doh barrah peg lao!*"

The mess-boy, completely oblivious, had padded past on large brown feet, and Chris, chuckling, had excused himself.

THAT had been six months ago. Disillusionment in England had forced him to reconsider the scheme. India was a warm, vital country—warm, too, in a purely physical

Disillusioned, war-time flier Christopher Lyle turned his back on an England in which he found himself a stranger, and returned to Asia, where the greatest adventure of his life awaited him.

ence that Chris, ten thousand miles away in a fog-bound London, could recall with nostalgia. Eve gone, his parents both dead, and only the cheerless prospect of restarting life in the city firm of Brooks and Merriwether. What on earth had he been doing in Brooks and Merriwether, anyway, before the war? God and Mr. Brooks—or Mr. Merriwether — might remember; Chris had forgotten.

And yet—and he knew it—that was a stupid, graceless attitude. Messrs. B and M, stock brokers of Leadenhall Street, E.C.2, had generously made up his Air Force pay, week by week, to a figure equal to his pre-war salary. The process had lasted through 1940 and '41; from when their contribution had been enormously greater than his airman's two-bob-a-day, to the day when, to his relief, and doubtless theirs, his promotion to flight lieutenant put him beyond need of charity.

London, scurrying to work, Homburg-hatted and self-righteous as ever, or cloth-capped and pushing barrows, or standing at West End corners in minks and Chanel Number Five, waiting for Americans.

Chris wasn't sorry to go. Messrs. Brooks and Merriwether, though expressing dismay that Squadron Leader Lyle, D.F.C. and Bar, did not feel himself in a position to rejoin the firm, made little attempt to persuade him. His position had been filled very capably throughout the war by a young man, by name Winterbottom, the flatness of whose feet had prevented his joining up. They would have regretted discharging Mr. Winterbottom. Perhaps the Squadron Leader would like to contact them on his return from Calcutta? Perhaps, too, he would keep in touch, as there were occasions when even Messrs. Brooks and Merriwether might be able to use contacts in the Orient.

Oliver was delighted. Things were shaping magnificently. Since his demob.—in fact, even before it — the firm had been deluged with hundreds of enquiries, and now the orders were piling up by the dozen. The sooner Chris came out, the better.

Chris bought his ticket.

It was strange being a box-wallah—a European in civilian clothes amongst Bengal dhoties and men still in uniform. An airman from his old unit passed him in Chowringhee, grinned cheerily and saluted. Chris, hatless, saluted smartly and felt such a fool that he retired into a shop and was sold a pair of suede shoes.

The firm, Lyle and Sturges—really it should have been the other way about, but Oliver, with, Chris suspected, a chuckle up his sleeve, had insisted that his senior officer's name go first—the firm wasn't doing too badly. Jute, that was the angle; swap it for ice-boxes, tinned food, Dutch gin—swap it for anything and collect your five per cent. So Oliver had explained the situation, and although its economics were not, perhaps, so straightforward, the import and export business, for the time being, was doing very nicely.

And yet, in a way, it was a vaguely unsatisfying form of existence. He wriggled damply in his chair and looked across at Oliver's moist, boyish face under its thatch of yellow hair—hair as undisciplined and enthusiastic as its owner. Oliver would enter the little Sham Bazar office each morning at nine, hair soaked into submission; by the time they adjourned at one for a quick drink at the Great Eastern it would have sprung up like corn and added three inches to his already considerable height.

Chris's hand subconsciously went up to his own hair, more restrained in behaviour and beginning to grey at the temples. Thirty-two years and one is technically still a young man, but with four of them spent in a continuous sequence of wild excitement, boredom and terror, in the air and on the ground, time treads more heavily.

"*Achha sahib, ane wallah hain.*"

The hotel boy ran across in reply to Oliver's frantic signal.

"Well, don't mind if I do."

"Wait for it — I haven't asked you yet, cock. Two gin and ginger, boy, and *jaldi lao!*"

Oliver still flung gratuitous fragments of Hindustani at all who would listen. Two years flying photo recce. Spitfires in Chris's squadron had filled him with an unbounded enthusiasm for things Oriental and a vocabulary of about ninety words. Chris had been lucky in his officers. So many other lads had come out from home with a firmly fixed hatred of the East. "Dirty swine—can't trust 'em." "My old man was out here in the last show—said the only way to get on with 'em was to kick them." "They only pretend they can't understand English." "You know, they're so damn uncivilised there isn't a word for please or thank you in any one of their languages."

Fatheads all, they'd done harm in their squadrons, and indirectly to everyone else, but in some miraculous way he'd been spared them. Possibly because his pilots on the whole were slightly older—hoary philosophers of twenty-one and up—or possibly because photo recce. required (so he liked to think) more brains, the squadron had settled down happily, first outside Calcutta, and then, shortly before the war's end, in Rangoon. The arrival in 1943 of two Indian pilot officers had been greeted, not with derision or even resignation, but with great enthusiasm.

HE could see a large shape bearing down upon them, and at that moment thought merged into actuality.

"Well, well, well, you two! So the glamour of the East has you in its spell! What're you doing—selling glass beads to the natives?"

Ranjit Singh seized the back of a chair with his one hand, flipped it behind him and sat down at the table.

"Good God — Randy! I thought you were up in the Punjab." Chris looked admiringly up at the smugly unwrinkled white linen suit, with its starched, empty sleeve pinned back to the shoulder. The curly black beard was drawn upwards on either side of the powerful jaw and combed up inside a blue puggri. "A drink—what'll it be? I suppose you haven't lashed out yet and started smoking?"

The smile froze; then Ranjit flung back his head and laughed.

"No, I haven't been converted yet, Chris. A whisky and water, please."

Chris choked back a sigh of relief. For a moment it looked as if he were taking offence. Funny—or was it? During war they'd got used to joking over each other's conventions, their prejudices, even their religion. Somehow, it had acted as a sort of safety valve. Perhaps he'd forgotten. Nothing sacred — and keep it that way. Sikhs don't smoke: O.K., but keep it out in the open. Johnson has a wooden leg: O.K. — borrow it for a cricket bat. Weinbaum—tell him the joke about the

Beginning—A Gripping New Serial

rabbi. A little forced politeness—any unnatural restraint and a pressure of resentment would build up, pound by pound, until the top blew off. Even the cannon shell which bit off Randy's arm at the shoulder and kept him cursing on the tarmac till the war's end had been good for a laugh or two.

Or had it? Chris glanced at the empty sleeve and waved vigorously at the waiter.

THE room was beginning to fill, and as sweating customers draped themselves round the marble-topped tables, a hotel boy switched on the overhead fans, one by one. The editor of the Calcutta "Statesman" rose majestically from the table he had been occupying and the boy switched off his fan. Some moments later he returned and the fan obediently went on again.

"This is our silliest extravagance of the day," Chris went on. "We rush round here at one o'clock, pour ounce after ounce of your unspeakable gin into our stomachs — at considerable expense — and then creep back to the office to eat sandwiches. To-day, however, *bahuit khaenge, humlog. Ap hamare sath khaenge?*"

"Meherbani se."

"Tell the dining-room, table for three, boy—and then come back with more drinks."

The turbaned, white-robed "boy"—fifty-five if he were a day—scampered up the steps toward the dining-room.

Outside, an altercation was taking place between a rickshaw wallah and a taxi driver as to which of them should be privileged to ferry two very drunk petty officers to the quayside. The voices, shrill and angry, were swept in through the open door, and Chris craned his neck to see. The protagonists were hidden from view by one end of the taxi, but, sitting resignedly side by side on the pavement, were the two petty officers. A group of Bengali children had gathered round them. A little girl of five or six stood unashamedly naked, and one of the sailors leaned unsteadily over to put his cap on her head.

It balanced there like an upturned basin, reaching almost to the narrow brown shoulders.

Delighted, she rushed in through the hotel door, pushed the cap back on her head so that it hung down between her shoulder blades, and stood surveying the inhabitants of the lounge. These in turn surveyed her; some with amusement, more with horror.

At this, the assistant manager of the hotel shot out from his office, arms flailing. The little girl, quite unperturbed, evaded him with a feint that would have done credit to a Rugby International, and skipped up to their table, where she stood, hands behind back, staring wide-eyed at them, with the absurd white cap only an inch or two above the table-top.

"Hello," said Chris.

The little figure stiffened, turned a dazzling smile on each of them in succession, and saluted. Then, with a shrill gurgle, it ducked past the assistant manager and was out in the blistering heat of the road.

"Ah—we have an admirer," said Randy.

The assistant manager waddled up to the table his fat brown face oozing humility. "I am very sorry, sir. What is coming to this country, sir, indeed, I am not knowing."

Chris, grinning, caught a glimpse of the Sikh over his shoulder. The face had become a strangely unfamiliar mask of skin and hair and the brown eyes smouldered through it.

"On the contrary," said Oliver, pushing back his chair, "I am deeply flattered. How about some food? One cannot import—or export, either, for that matter—on an empty stomach."

THE air-conditioned dining-room was a blessed relief from the steaming humidity of the lounge. Chris seated himself and prepared to go through the menu from top to bottom, including in his meal even the sun-dried and evil-smelling fish which masqueraded as "Bombay Duck."

He was vaguely and pleasantly conscious that all eyes were upon their table. They were an impressive-looking trio—and he was just young enough and vain enough to be pleased at the thought. He, as the midget of the party, scaled a fraction under six feet, while Oliver, even without the amazing hair, must be at least two inches taller.

As for the Sikh . . .

"Just how tall are you, anyway, Randy?"

"Me? Absolutely no idea, old boy. Adequate, I hope." Two olives and a stick of celery disappeared from view.

Six foot four, probably. Chris ordered and leant back in his chair. Randy, still munching, waved a stick of celery at Oliver.

"Kissing a man without a beard is like eating celery without salt, they tell me. Thought you might like to know. You'd look quite striking in a yellow beard."

Yes, it was the same old Randy — as insincere on the surface as ever—and as handsome. Two young girls, Americans from the Consulate, stared unashamedly at him from their table a few feet away, while the two even younger R.A.S.C. subalterns who had contracted to buy their lunch stared moodily into plates of lobster salad.

Oblivious of the attention, Randy turned from the olives to Chris.

"So you're in the trading racket together? I heard someone mention the name of the firm yesterday, but I couldn't believe it. Then when I was given a description of the management — well, of course, I couldn't go wrong. Did you know the muscles in your cheeks move when your mouth's closed?"

"No—can't say I did."

"Well, neither did I, but you can't fool all of us all the time. Fellow by the name of Das Cupta—a very loyal employee, I believe — is quite fascinated by the way they wiggle when you think. He was almost lyrical about your distinguished but youthful appearance. I think he puts you at a well-preserved forty-five."

Chris smiled feebly.

"And as for—well, Flying Officer Sturges is still remembered as the Great-Lover-of-the-War-Years."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Granted. Your exploits on the ground left rather a bigger mark than those in the air. Even the fact that you were one of the first pilots to be shot down by American ack ack has been eclipsed by your being nearly shot down in the "300" by an angry pongo. D'you remember?"

"Yes, thanks—only too well. How was I to know she was his wife? Honest to God, I didn't think she was married at all. She lived by herself, remember."

"She was such a nice girl, too. I wonder what happened to her and that major? I don't believe they lived together for more than a week after they were married. She was far too good for him. One of those wartime marriages."

He coughed hastily. Chris was starting on the first course. It had arrived, barefoot and unheralded, in front of each of them. Randy looked inquiringly across the table, and they started in silence.

Good old Chris. Oliver glanced up from the cold consomme. They'd always treated him with respect, partly because he was, after all the squadron leader and, damn it, a squadron leader was a squadron leader, but partly also because of a certain quality as a man—a strange, natural superiority in almost everything he did. Funny, that. It was reasonable to expect he'd be the best pilot in the squadron; the bloke who could flog a tattered Spitfire back to base long after healthier aircraft had been left to spin themselves, untenanted, into the sea; the man who could coax a Merlin engine just a hundred feet higher—and then land it with a dead prop after the oil feed was shot through.

All this was reasonable, but Chris the man somehow wasn't as easy to pigeonhole as Chris the airman.

Chris the man would make 106 runs when just that apparently unattainable figure was required to win the game and then be clean bowled. Odd, Oliver's smooth pink face crumpled unconsciously into a frown. Chris the man would retire to the fringe of the mess party, drinking round for round, but listening and laughing while the others fought for a place in the queue to tell those stories that seem so damn funny after the first four drinks.

Then, when every bolt had been shot, eyes glazed and feet leaden, he'd quite unobtrusively start injecting a little of his own vitality into the gathering. A new story—the only one they'd never heard in the mess before; a challenge to a game of rugger in the anteroom; or a tune on the piano; and in less time than it takes to swallow a tablet of benzedrine, the party would have recovered.

Without Chris, mess parties never seemed to get a second wind. Sometimes he stayed to the hilarious, perspiring end; but more often than not he disappeared as unobtrusively as he'd come. On one occasion, Oliver followed and found him, smoking a pipe on his cot and reading "Alice in Wonderland." The two of them had sat talking till long after the laughter and shouting next door had died away into the semi-silence of an Indian night.

Chris had talked of Eve, and their few happy weeks together. And then, though the object of the exercise had been to find out as much as possible about Chris, Oliver had found himself pouring out all his own innermost thoughts. At one stage he'd even admitted that wartime flying terrified him. Chris, unperturbed, had added that wartime flying terrified everyone. They'd discussed courage and the first and second cousins, bravery and bravado. Chris had got a bit deep then, but his theory had been that one is born with a certain quantity—a quantity

measurable maybe in grams, milliamps or degrees centigrade or something. Sticky situations reduce the quantity, and in normal times the body makes it up again. A series of drains on it, however, reduce it to a stage where the body can't do so.

"Personally, I think that ten years after this show's over we'll still jump out of our skins when the door slams."

Perhaps he'd been right, though certainly Chris hadn't at any stage shown outward sign of a falling-off in milliamps. Others in the squadron, though, had; a gradual change in behaviour, even in appearance. Some became garrulous, others got moody; some noisily welcomed any opportunity to get into the air; others were reticent on the subject.

I wonder, thought Oliver, just what I was like? Perhaps the war ended just in time.

And yet, I wouldn't mind another crack at it. Silly, though, to break one's neck in peacetime. You're a hero when you break it in anger; you're the bright, disarmingly self-conscious lad in the studio photograph, with a nice blue uniform straight from the tailor and a tiny pair of wings. You don't go home at the end of the war, a boring little man with no wings and a fifty-shilling suit.

Randy was talking. "Yes, I've got a job right here in Calcutta. Oddly enough, it's connected with flying." He glanced down at the empty sleeve. "I let other people do it for me. There's one of them over there."

HE jerked a butter knife over his shoulder at a murderous-looking Chinese who was sitting at a table with an Anglo-Indian girl. His hair was cropped short and an almost unbelievable scar ran from one cheekbone, missing the eye by a fraction, completely across the spherical head to disappear behind the other ear. It was as if someone had thought to peel him like a potato, and then, after the first slice, had decided against the plan. He was dressed in a U.S.A.A.F. windcheater and a pair of filthy khaki slacks.

The Chinese managed in one sweeping, panoramic leer, to convey possession of his partner, loathing of the two Englishmen, dislike of the Sikh, and contempt for all four.

"Yes," said Randy, as they returned to the more attractive prospect of food, "that cheery bloke is Michael Wu, who does some of my flying for me."

"I hope you don't let your passengers get a look at him before take-off," smiled Chris. "One frank, boyish grin like that, and I'd go by train."

Randy laughed, and the blue turban shook like a jelly in a cyclone. "You couldn't go by train, Chris — not where Michael goes. And in any case he doesn't carry passengers."

"Freight run, eh?"

"Well, sort of."

There was a silence, heavy, palpable and oppressive; one of those silences that embarrassingly takes the place of speech when people share a thought, and know it. It was broken, mercifully, by Randy.

"It's a pretty well-paid job, as a matter of fact."

The silence flopped down between them again.

"Really?"

"Yes. It's on a piecework basis, really. No fixed salary. Michael must clear six or seven thousand chips a month."

Oliver put down his knife and fork.

"He *what*?"

"Clears six or seven thousand rupees a month."

"That man?"

"Yes, that man."

"Opium, I suppose." Chris volunteered the statement, and then felt ashamed of himself. "Sorry, Randy. Of course you wouldn't be in that sort of a racket. Shook me a bit, though; that's a hell of a lot of money. Does he double as a gigolo at the end of the run?"

Randy ignored him. "I don't suppose the up-and-coming firm of Lyle and Sturges offers its directors much more than that. Or does it?"

There was a pause and both directors spoke at once.

"Well, no—not yet, Randy, but—seven thousand chips is a lot — at least the firm is permanent — we might get it up to seven thousand before long—I hope—perhaps."

The waiter, proffering second helpings of water-ice, was ignored completely. Hurt, he strode from the room, his laden tray balanced on one large brown palm at earhole level, while the other hand threshed the air as a balance. One of the discomfited R.A.S.C. subalterns, staying behind to pay the bill while his three companions adjourned to the bar, ducked as the great windmill of an arm swept past his head and disappeared into the pantry.

Wu left the room, silently and without a nod in their direction. Oliver followed with his eyes, past the other tables and up to the swinging glass door which led out, via some stairs, into an air-conditionless exterior.

Randy waved for the bill. "I must run now. Would you be interested in hearing more about my job sometime?"

"Yes."

"Well, how about Friday night? Meet here and I'll take you places."

Chris took the bill from the waiter. "O.K. This lunch is on me. I'm looking forward to being taken places."

Randy paused, as if to speak, then, with a shrug, turned to the door. When he reached it, he called over his shoulder. "Splendid. Eight o'clock. And thanks for lunch."

"DAS GUPTA, can you fix that fan? One moment the place is like a Turkish bath; the next, there's a tornado whipping away all my papers."

"O.K., sirr." Das Gupta, grinning affably, waded heavily through a lake of invoices which lapped his ankles, across the little office, and over to the fan switch on the wall. With one chubby brown hand he moved the lever a notch to the left and watched the ceiling fan slow down.

"How about that? Cool enough?"

"No," said Chris. "But as my only alternative is to work on the floor, it'll have to do. Thanks."

Das Gupta, corpulent and cool in the thin white dhoti, returned to his corner table, stopping in mid-ocean to rescue half a dozen invoices, which he tossed on to Chris's desk. The remaining twenty or thirty he ignored.

Oliver looked up from his own desk and laughed.

"Gad, sir, I don't know what they'd say in Poona if they could see. Rank mutiny, sir."

Das Gupta, baffled, looked from one to the other, unhappy confusion spreading across his features.

"Yes, sirr?"

"Nothing, Das Gupta; nothing."

The Bengali lowered himself into his chair and stared at the glass inkwell before him. If there was one thing he disliked more than another it was being the butt of an incomprehensible Saxonism. Bewildered and hurt, he held the inkwell up before the window, decided the contents were in need of a change, and went out to manufacture more at the basin in the corridor.

Chris watched out of the corner of an eye. Das Gupta waded through the papers once again, and then, as though vouchsafed a message from his creator, stopped dead. Slowly he bent down and started picking them up, brushing each with the back of his hand, blowing on it and holding it slantwise against the light to see that no dust escaped his attention. With a final flourish, he placed the pile on Chris's desk and stalked out into the corridor.

"Thank you, Das Gupta."

"That is arl right, sirr."

In a moment he was back, walking with the well-fed stolidity of the babu class, slippered toes outwards and three feet apart. Held well before him and just clear of the muslin-clad belly, was the inkwell.

"I believe you're an admirer of Mr. Lyle's cheek muscles, Das Gupta."

This was too much. Two conundrums in as many minutes.

"I do not understand, sirr."

"Only that Mr. Lyle and I met a Sikh friend two days ago whom we'd known in the

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The Golden Boy

Is there anyone in the world, young or old, who has not heard of the Prodigal Son? Here is his story as seen through the eyes of a man who is an internationally famous author, as well as a close student of the Scriptures.

By DALE COLLINS

I

OLD Michaelis was a wealthy farmer who owned many cattle and sheep and groves of fruit trees, and he had two sons, Mark and John. John was dark and quiet and reliable, the best son a man on the land could wish for, since he worked from dawn to dusk, and handled those under him with a kind of gentle discipline which kept them at their tasks but did not irk them, whereas Mark was a golden boy, golden of hair and skin, restless, idle, good at all play and games, merry and volatile, but quite irresponsible and also quite useless in the running of the property.

Michaelis was a widower, and each son meant much to him—Mark, perhaps, the more though he would never have admitted it. John was himself over again, and that was a pleasant thing for a father and made him feel sure and at ease with him. But Mark was his mother's son. The quiet farmer had loved her dearly because she was his very opposite — a dancing, singing, lovely thing who teased him a lot for being a stodgy old country bumpkin, but loved him a lot also. She was bright and gay as a sunbeam until the black cloud of Death blotted the sunbeam out so soon—so very, very soon—alackaday!

He saw lost Mary in the boy, and so his heart yearned over him, and feared for him, too. For Mark's gaiety was different from hers, which had been innocent as a babe's, but there was a wildness in his, a recklessness, a craving for excitement and thrills.

Yes, he was afraid for Mary's Mark. He had seen one sunbeam vanish.

Now the farm was in an isolated part out beyond Beersheba, but there was another property nearby and the owner had a daughter who was beautiful. Her name was Ruth, and she and the golden boy and his dark, quiet brother had grown up together. They were young still, and there had been no great talk of love or marriage, though that awaited in to-morrow or to-morrow of next year.

As was only natural, Ruth, in her secret heart, favoured Mark.

Any girl would have done that, particularly a maid who loved to laugh, even as Mark's mother had.

II

SPRING came, and with it restlessness for such as Mark, though to Michaelis and his counterpart, John, it merely meant greater activity on the land which was theirs.

One evening when the father was taking his ease after the long day beneath the scented lemon trees, Mark came to him, looking so like his mother, and smiling her smile.

"Father," he said, "I want to talk to you."

"You know you can always do that, boy," said Michaelis, and his heart was touched as ever by the smile.

"But this is serious," said Mark, sitting down beside his father.

"You are seldom that, Mark."

"Now I am. I want to get away from here. I am tired, not of you or John, but of Beersheba and the farm and the flocks and the trees. I am not ungrateful, but I am not much of a success here. And I am bored, very bored. Out there, father," and he pointed into the big sky where a tiny crescent of moon sailed space, and the stars were coming out, "is a big world, a wider world than any of our family have ever seen. I wish to see it, right to the Pillars of Hercules where it ends. You are a rich man, and I would have my share of what you have for us whilst I am young and can use it."

The golden boy sat there, very vital, very eager, aglow with youth and the fret of spring.

At first the face of Michaelis was sad, for he did not wish to have this son, who was so like Mary, go venturing out into the great world beyond their happy fields. He would miss the sight of him, and his merry eyes and the sound of his laughter. Without him there would be a hole like a cave in their little world with only the echoes of that laughter in it.

Michaelis sat twining the end of his beard about his forefinger, as was his habit when he pondered.

John did not wait patiently, for he was not a patient young man, but paced about behind his father, picking fruit from the trees and flinging some of it to the goats. The goats bleated their thanks at him and he grinned at them, for they, too, were feckless, wandering creatures.

And Michaelis sitting there reached a decision. He had had much experience in making decisions — what to sow and when, whom to employ, whom to discharge, when to

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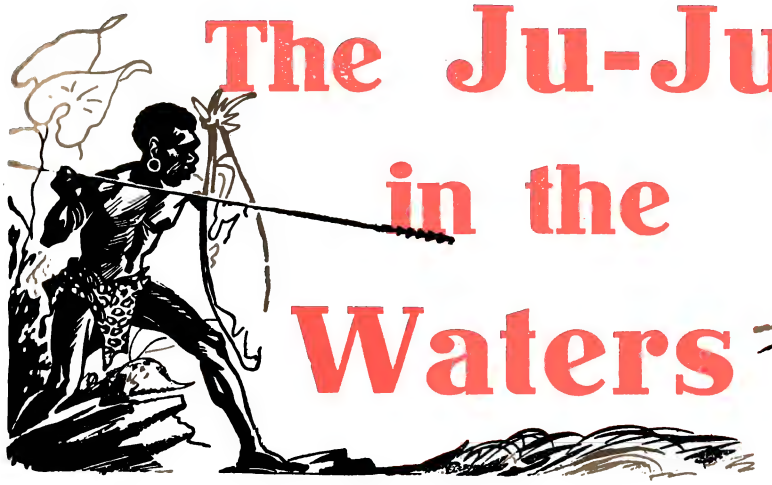

The Ju-Ju in the Waters

By FRANCIS GERARD

THERE was at one time a village in the N'Gombi which was built just near the confluence of the great river and its tributary, the Sumu. Each year when the rivers were in spate the waters rose and flooded most of the huts in the village, but, being N'Gombi and therefore indolent, the villagers merely picked up their blankets and cooking-pots and camped miserably among the trees until the waters elected to go down again. The members of any tribe but the N'Gombi would have had enough sense and energy to realise that there might come a time when the waters rose sufficiently to make the village completely uninhabitable. And, of course, this happened. There came a time when it rained practically unceasingly for more than a moon and the rivers throughout the land rose swollen and menacing until at last they drowned the world.

The particular City of Reeds with which we are concerned was washed away and the foolish villagers, returning from the forest, stared in dismay for, so great had been the hunger of the water, where their village had stood was now a shallow lagoon. Only one of their flimsy buildings had survived the floods since this had been erected, purely by chance, upon a small outcrop of rock amidst the soft soil. Thus there rose from the centre of the new lagoon the ju-ju hut of the village. Now this was a great miracle and very devilish and the villagers were almost pleased at the destruction of their home for, from the disaster, they were assured of the dreadful powers of their ju-ju.

L'Beni, the village witch-doctor, took a canoe and paddled to the tiny island on which stood the ghost-hut. Here he landed and entered the low and narrow doorway to make certain that R'Tanu of the One Eye was still actually present. The hideous idol of carven wood stared maleficently back at him and L'Beni was thankful and reassured.

The N'Gombi villagers moved a mile or so farther downstream and built themselves another village which was sited with exactly the same stupidity as the one which had been engulfed by the floods. They had learned nothing. But this village was not given the name of the City of Reeds. They called it by a long composite Bomongo word which means "the-village - where - the - ju-ju - sits - in-the-water."

It was, of course, most inconvenient to have the village ju-ju so far from the village for, if a man wished to take gifts or to sacrifice a chicken to R'Tanu, he had a tiring pull upstream against the current to get there. The witch-doctor, whose office prescribed more frequent visits, grew lean and fit from the unwonted exercise.

Sanders had once witnessed the annual Visit of Feasting when the whole village turned out to do honour to their ju-ju and had seen a sight unique in the Territories in the ceremonial procession of canoes which paddled round and round the island ghost-hut, their occupants singing melancholy little songs in R'Tanu's honour.

THERE was born in a certain castle in Pomerania towards the end of the last century a baby boy upon whom fortune seemed to smile. His father had died three months before his birth and the little boy was thus born Count Rudolph Otto Maximilien von Slein. He could trace his ancestry back to the knights of the old Teutonic Order, and his family had been settled as vast landowners in the north-east of Germany for centuries. When he grew up he was sent first to a most exclusive school for gentlemen of his caste in Bavaria and then to Eton. He put in a year at Utrecht University and from there moved to Heidelberg and collected the little duelling scars which were indispensable for one of his kind.

Then, since he was a gentleman who counted no less than twenty-three quarterings on his shield, he attended the Military Academy near Dresden and, passing out at the top of the list, joined the White Hussars.

He was a most efficient young officer and his colonel spoke so highly of him that, with young von Slein's background, he was earmarked as a future aide-de-camp to the Emperor. Eton had taught him to be good at games and he was a fine horseman, a strong swordsman and a first-class shot. He was good-looking in the blond, rather obvious, German way, witty and intelligent and, of course, of impeccable breeding. He was a popular figure in the drawing-rooms of Berlin and Potsdam and there was many a stout Baron who eyed the slim figure hopefully on behalf of their tow-headed and obedient daughters. But Count Rudolph was a gay young spark who had no intention of marrying until such time as he had become at least second-in-command of his regiment.

Von Slein did all those things which a German nobleman is expected to do. He rode at Olympia (and was vastly mortified by being beaten by the captain of the French team), shot grouse in Scotland upon a moor belonging to an old school friend, conducted a very successful safari in German East Africa, and underwent a short term of imprisonment in a military fortress for fighting his first duel. Here he dined every evening with the governor, who brought him a personal message from the Chancellor to the effect that his term of detention would soon be reduced since, though the other man had died, he was a singu-

According to the fatalistic Arab, if it was written that he should hang, hang he would. Mr. Commissioner Sanders saw to it that he did.

larly tiresome fellow and only a Grenadier at that.

Fortune smiled upon the young man and even his friendship with Prince Carl, who ruled a small semi-independent State near the Austrian frontier, cast no shadow as to what was to come.

Then, quite suddenly, young von Slein was seen no more about the huge German drawing-rooms, nor was he at his castle in Pomerania and the barrack-square at Potsdam knew him not. Few people knew anything about the affair, for it was kept dark upon the strict instructions of the All Highest, himself. Moreover it might have had international implications because the man who complained of being cheated at poker was the British Naval Attache in Berlin and first cousin to the then Prime Minister in London. Such information as leaked out was hazy in the extreme, but an inner few knew that the Englishman had actually put his hand upon a pack which, when examined, was proved to be marked. Only two men round that card-table had handled that particular pack. One of them was Prince Carl of Rudenberg. The other was Rudi von Slein.

Had von Slein not disliked the English so much he might have kept his temper and thus avoided the suspicion which immediately fell upon him. But he made the mistake of challenging the Naval Attache who replied contemptuously that if he had to fight he only fought with gentlemen. The young count flew into a rage, called the other a pig of an Englishman, threatened him with the war which was coming, and was hustled out of the room by two members of the Diplomatic Corps who feared to let the affair go any further. The following morning Rudolph von Slein's commanding officer sent him a curt note requesting him to send in his papers.

According to his peculiar code there was nothing Rudolph could do if his friend, Prince Carl, chose to remain silent. For he realised that for one of the Prince's position to stoop to cheating at cards meant that he was utterly desperate. Rudolph von Slein deliberately committed social suicide for the sake of his friend.

He paid a brief visit to the enormous house in Pomerania and it is typical of his code that he did not even reveal the truth to his broken-hearted mother. He collected a few things, drove to the little wayside halt where the stationmaster would flag a train and thereafter was seen no more in his familiar haunts.

TWO months later one Hans Baumann landed from a Dutch boat at Dar-es-Salaam. Here he joined the quasi-military police force with which the German authorities kept the natives in their place. The police chief, interviewing him upon his application, noted the cut of his jib and the little duelling-scars upon his cheek and guessed very shrewdly that here was another broken-down gentleman whose name might be anything but was certainly not Hans Baumann. None the less, he looked a likely sort of fighting-man and was duly taken on.

As was but natural he stood out head and shoulders above the non-commissioned-officer type who led and commanded the native askaris. For one thing, he never had to shout. His manner got for him what a parade-ground voice very often failed to get. Moreover, he had a natural aptitude for languages—he already spoke English, French, Spanish and Italian—and he rapidly picked up Swahili and Arabic. Within two years he had been promoted three times and with his third step up he was transferred to a district of the Cameroons in German West Africa. It was not long before Baumann had been spotted by the Governor, himself, as one who might be brought closer into Administration, since he was quite outstanding among his fellows.

And then a certain Archduke was murdered at some obscure dirty little hamlet in the Balkans. Ultimatums flashed backwards and forewards between the Great Powers and the first shots were fired in the First World War.

Immediately Hans Baumann found himself sent south to make contact with French troops pushing up from the Gaboon. He showed himself a skilled jungle fighter and his big Luger pistol fitted with a silencer had a demoralising effect upon isolated French patrols.

When it was seen that German resistance was weakening Hans Baumann or von Slein, to give him his own name, acted upon his own initiative and without reference to his general. With all his ammunition, stores and weapons he slipped away with his battalion to a point just north of Spanish territory. Here he waited, with the knowledge that he could slip across the Spanish border when he wished, for any hue and cry to die down. Finding himself unpursued either by the French invaders or his own authorities, he marched by night due north, lying up with his men during the daylight hours in the forest. And in due time, having crossed no less than four rivers, he came to the little town of Tibati and here, having done certain things according to plan, he disbanded his men and went away.

HARUN IBN MALIK was a Mohammedan, a believer in the one God, one and indivisible, and in Mahomet, His Prophet. He was also a true believer in the importance of Harun ibn Malik, his profit and his well-being. By nature lazy and with an inclination towards soft living, this smiling Zanzibari Arab travelled enormous distances through the less comfortable parts of the world to seek the wherewithal to pile up treasure against a comfortable and delightfully debauched old age. He was a man of parts and had done a little of this and a little of that, but principally he stuck to his two most profitable lines of traffic, the dissemination of synthetic gin and the old and honourable profession of slaver.

Though he went almost incredible distances through the back-lands he travelled with as much comfort as he could, and his little double silk tent was a miracle of cleanliness and neatness. Moreover, he had a proper camp-bed and upon it a wonderful quilted mattress which he had lifted from the establishment of a senior political officer somewhere in French Equatorial Africa. Also when he made camp each evening there was unpacked from the padded basket in which it travelled a beautiful water-pipe which he had won from a fellow-slaver at dice, Harun ibn Malik supplying the dice.

When the white men fell to fighting among themselves throughout Africa, Harun hovered on the outskirts of the combat, for there were many pickings for such as he, even if there was a little risk attached. But risk was nothing to Harun ibn Malik, who so loved money for its own sake that he would cheerfully venture his neck for a bad Spanish dollar.

When the Allemani and the Frenchi went to war in the Cameroons, Harun, who quite incorrectly referred to himself as the Shaik ibn Malik, discovered a particularly splendid source of profit. A large force of Senegalese infantry under a certain Colonel Dubois caught one of the German garrisons by surprise and chased it clean out of the little town where it had established itself in some comfort. Being an energetic man, the Frenchman pressed the pursuit nor left even a small detachment to collect the Germans' stores. Harun, who was hovering unseen in the neighbourhood with his porters and the Arabs who were his servants, slipped into the deserted town and looted the building which had housed both the officers' and under-officers' messes. Here he came upon a wondrous find, no less than twenty-four cases of spirits and fifty of wine. Moreover, there was a huge stack of empty bottles and these were almost as valuable since he intended to make both spirits and wine go a great deal further than they were designed by a nice admixture of crude methylated spirits.

Hastily impressing additional porters, Harun ibn Malik scuttled off to the north with his treasure-trove and came at last, by secret ways such as he knew, into the Territories governed by Mr. Commissioner Sanders.

Though he had never met the Commissioner — such an honour was the last he could have desired—he knew Sanders by repute, of old. He went more carefully about his unlawful occasions in the Territories than anywhere else in all Africa. He went swiftly from village to village, keeping his camp in that state of preparedness which would enable him to leave at first sight of a scarlet tarboosh or the drill-clad figure of a white man. The villagers brought out their treasure of ivory tusks and pressed it upon him in return for the liquid delight which he dispensed and it was only a matter of weeks before he had again slipped away from the Territories enriched to the tune of several thousand pounds on a capital outlay of precisely nothing.

He went back into what had been the German Cameroons, for the country was still in a state of turmoil, even though all German resistance had collapsed. At a particular spot, whose exact position he marked very clearly in his mind, he buried the elephant tusks and when the earth had been put back and they were concealed, he and his half-breed Arabs swiftly and scientifically shot every one of the wretched porters who had carried the ivory.

"Thus it is better so," said Harun smiling at his head ser-

vant, "for is it not written in the Sura of the Djinn that only with the dead are secrets safe?"

"Shaik," replied the other, who was something of a purist, "I do not think that is stated in the Sura of the Djinn."

"There are many Suras, Ali," shrugged Harun philosophically, "if not in that of the Djinn assuredly in another. These dead Kaffirs we will throw in the river, for soon they will smell bad and here we rest for several days."

It was towards sundown the following evening that this amiable rascal was sitting cross-legged upon a little mat before his tent, the amber mouthpiece of the water-pipe which he had won with loaded dice, cool and fragrant between his bearded lips. He had slept well the night before for he was without conscience, and the men he killed lay still whether they lay in a grave or no. He had spent a comfortable day in the shade of the cool trees conversing with his chief servant upon the probable splendours of the paradise which awaited the faithful and other metaphysical matters such as the appearance and accomplishments of the blessed houris. He was in a serene and philosophic mood as he sat watching the dying sun and then his hand slid almost imperceptibly into a fold in his burnous and came smoothly out again holding a long-barrelled automatic.

The shadow of the stranger fell across the unwavering blue steel barrel.

"Put away your weapon," said the tall blond man, "for I come in peace and it is written that the stranger comes from God."

"So it is written," agreed Harun cautiously, "yet in my time have I known certain strangers who undoubtedly came from another source and might have done me much mischief but for my forethought. Also," he went on, peering closely at the white man's face, "you are of the Allemani people for you wear little cuts upon your face."

Rudolph von Slein sank down upon the grass and faced the other. He settled himself cross-legged and at ease and ignored the automatic pistol which followed his every movement.

"You are the Shaik ibn Malik," he said quietly in liquid Arabic. "Of you I have heard."

Harun's eyes narrowed to shining slits, for white men who had heard of him had seldom heard anything good.

"I," continued the German, "am one whom the Kaffirs speak of as Lotembu and I ruled this part of the land for the master of my country."

"Of you, I also have heard," nodded the Arab. "Now it seems to me, Allemani, that speech between such as you and I can be of little profit."

"The ju-ju in the ghost hut spoke to him in a hollow, booming voice. . . ."

"Not so," replied the other, "for you are a lover of money and I," he smiled wryly, "am a lover of honour. Now, behold, Shaik, I may show you how you may gain much money through me."

"Say on," said Harun, "for I have ears to listen."

L'BENI, the witch-doctor, as chief ministrant to the ju-ju in the water was, by virtue of his office, far more familiar with R'Tanu than any of his fellow villagers. He performed the immemorial office of members of countless forms of priesthood, that of go-between and interpreter between man and his gods. He, himself, was agnostic with regard to the dreadful powers of R'Tanu of the One Eye, but he concealed his doubt from his fellows lest he find himself without employment. Next to the chief of the village he was the most important man in the community and, at certain seasons, such as during the Visit of Feasting, he superseded the headman in authority. It was the old working arrangement between primitive Church and State.

Once, many years before, the shoals of fish upon which the village depended for its living unaccountably moved their feeding-ground and the villagers knew a long period of desperate privation during which they constantly besought their ju-ju to bring the fish back to the places where hitherto they had fed. The ju-ju in the water either turned a deaf ear to the pleas of his people or his jurisdiction did not extend to the movements of fish. In either case he showed himself somewhat inadequate as the presiding spirit to watch over the interests of a fishing-village. L'Beni exhausted his imagination in explaining why the ju-ju did not do what he was asked and, at last, when his invention was exhausted, he entered the ghost-hut alone, and, greatly daring, kicked R'Tanu smartly with the side of his foot.

Agnostic though he was, L'Beni himself was a bit shaken by the apparent result, for the following day a young fisherman who had gone out almost in despair, returned with the glad tidings that the fish were back at their old feeding-ground.

With some hope of renewed success L'Beni tried this sacrilegious approach a second time—on this occasion it was for rain—but either he kicked R'Tanu in the wrong place or the first kick was pure coincidence, for all L'Beni got for his pains was a very nasty bruise on the ankle.

One morning the witch-doctor emerged from his hut which stood alongside the chief's, and all men knew by the bladders which he wore about his waist that he was in spiritual communion with the ju-ju in the water, whom he was about to visit.

He walked in silence down the village street, pausing every dozen paces or so to touch the ground to left and right with the tips of the fingers of his right hand. Still in silence he stepped into his ceremonial canoe and thrust it laboriously against the stream towards the almost forgotten site of the old village. Once out of sight and hearing of the village, L'Beni relaxed and taking out a crude pipe stuffed it with the native tobacco which is strong enough to send a white man into a coma. There was a tiny fire burning in a pot between his feet from which he lighted his pipe.

L'Beni was a lazy man and he liked his long days when he visited R'Tanu for he merely squatted just inside the ghost-hut and smoked contemplatively, thinking great thoughts such as how the world was made, why Sandi was of so ugly a colour and of what he would have for his evening meal.

On this occasion he arrived at the tiny island, stepped out of his canoe, moored it, straightened himself and fell full length into the water. He surfaced gasping and spluttering, a very frightened man, not at his predicament (he could swim like a fish) but for a reason more terrifying than anything he had previously experienced. As he had stood momentarily after tying up his canoe, the ju-ju

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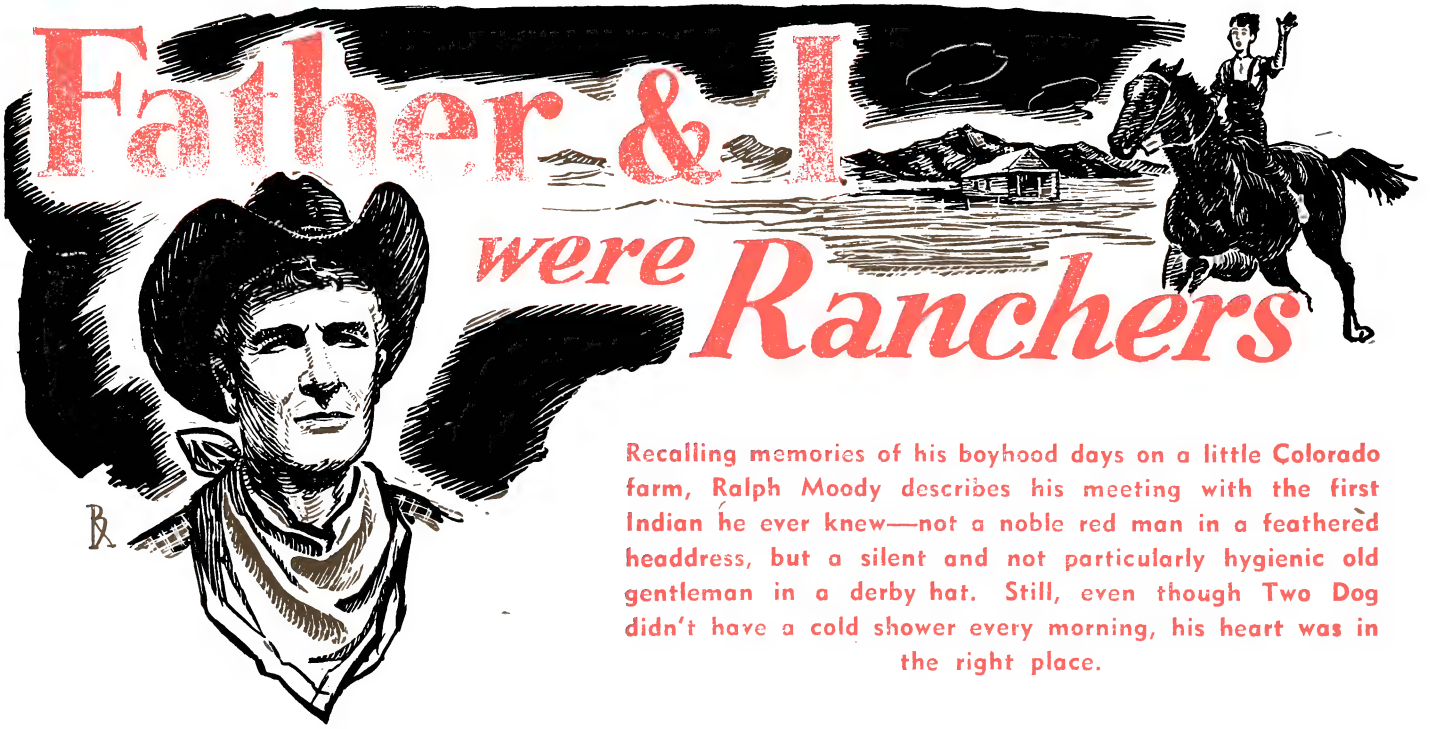
Father & I were Ranchers



Recalling memories of his boyhood days on a little Colorado farm, Ralph Moody describes his meeting with the first Indian he ever knew—not a noble red man in a feathered headdress, but a silent and not particularly hygienic old gentleman in a derby hat. Still, even though Two Dog didn't have a cold shower every morning, his heart was in the right place.

By RALPH MOODY

MY FRIEND TWO DOG.

WHEN I got in from herding one evening early in June, there were two scrawny jug-headed buckskins tied to an old rickety spring wagon in our yard. Nobody was in sight, so we tore right for the barn. Fanny and I had a system at the barn. If I stayed on she had to go through the doorway slow or I'd get scraped off. But she always liked to pop right in quick, so I'd slide way back on her rump and slip off over her tail at the last second. I'd got so I could do it and land on my feet most every night — without spilling the can of milk I always brought from Aultlands'.

I had to time it just right, and that night I was thinking so much about who might be in the house that I must have been a little careless. Anyway, I hadn't slid back far enough on Fanny's rump, so when I ooched to go off over her tail I didn't go all the way, and crashed into the header of the barn door. When I woke up I didn't have any idea where in the world I was for about a minute. I was lying on a pile of hay and an old man with a long white beard and a battered ten-gallon felt hat was looking down at me from squinty blue eyes that were sunk way back in his head. I shut my eyes again quick, and heard him say to somebody else, "Ain't hurt a bit, ain't hurt a bit. 'Fraid the little papoose mighta brained hisself."

I remembered what had happened then, and knew where I was. The first thing I thought about was the milk, because Mother had been giving me heck every time I spilled some of it, so I said, "Did I spill the milk?"

The old man laughed and laughed, then he said, "No, Bucko, you didn't spill scarcely none of it. Two Dog ketched it soon as ever it lit."

I sat up then and looked around to see who Two Dog was. He was a wizened old, old Indian, and his face was so wrinkled it looked like a baked apple that's been left over till it's all dried out. His hair wasn't braided like the Indians I'd seen in books, but hung down in scraggly strings to his shoulders, and he had a faded derby hat balanced square on the top of his head. His coat was faded black, too, and the back of it was long and rounded, like the minister's back in East Rochester. He had on a tight pair of bright blue trousers, and white moccasins with lots of red beads on them. He just looked at me without changing his face a bit. Then he grunted and went over and sat down with his back against the side of the barn.

I had just got on my feet when Father came out to see why I hadn't brought in the milk. I must have had quite a bump on my head, because it was the first thing he saw, and asked me what kind of tricks I'd been up to now. I didn't get a chance to tell him, because the old man with the whiskers told him first. He said, "Me and Two Dog was a-sittin' here agin the barn havin' a smoke when this little coyote come a-ridin' in. The mare spooked and high-tailed into the barn like a scairt prairie dog into his hole. The papoose, he didn't have a chanct and bunged his head agin the barn. Ain't hurt a mite, though; not a broke bone anywheres." He took hold of my arm and worked it up and down like a pump handle to show Father.

Father said for me to come to the house and get cleaned up for supper. On the way in he told me the old man was Mr. Thompson, and that he claimed to have had his camp site in 1840 right where our house was now. While I was getting washed I asked him about Two Dog, because he was the first Indian I had seen close to. Father said he didn't know much about him, but he had heard that he was a Blackfoot, and that he and Mr. Thompson had lived together up in the foothills since long before anybody could remember.

The house smelled awfully good. Father had killed one of the hens, and Mother had it cooking in the big iron pot. She was putting in the dumplings when she told us that Mr. Thompson and Two Dog were going to eat supper with us and stay all night. She said they might not eat just the way we did and she didn't want to catch one of us staring at them. Then she told Philip and me that she had fixed a shakedown in our room, and that they were going to sleep with us. and that she didn't want us to do any whispering after we went to bed because we might disturb our visitors.

Mother let me go out to call them when supper was ready, but Two Dog wouldn't come to the house. He was still sitting on the ground with his back against the barn. His eyes didn't move or blink, but looked off across our bean field as though he were watching something far away. Mr. Thompson said Two Dog wasn't used to houses and didn't like them, but he'd bring his supper out to him when we got done eating.

The way he ate, I don't think Mr. Thompson could have had a square meal in months. He just used his fork to push things on his knife, and he pushed them on clear up to the handle. Mr. Thompson kept telling Mother that he hadn't tasted such victuals since he was a little boy back in Missouri, and she kept

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Open Sesame

The wallaroo recognised the man as his enemy, but thought him a little less to be feared than the dingo pack.

By RAY HARRIS

A DESERT-EDGE rainstorm had filled the claypan and gone. But now the acres of water had shrunk to a yellow pool scarce four feet deep; and a phantom sea, the mock-ocean mirage of Sahara and Australia, rolled waves like molten glass across the sun-cracked clay surround. It billowed ceaselessly inwards from all the horizons, as though this muddy pool was the focal point of everything under the sky. Its billowing hid a two-wheeled gig jogging slowly in from the northward, immersing horse and gig and the two men who swayed with the lurching wheels.

Yet the sound came not from there but from the southward. Faint at first, scarce stirring the silence, it was all in a moment an urgent, rhythmic thudding, the bounding form that made it lifting again and again from the glassy mirage with a headlong leaping oddly prehistoric. In the same instant head and reddish body took shape — a wallaroo, a rock kangaroo, in hard-pressed, panting flight; and, before he made three bounds in plain view, the pack of nine dingoes, galloping voiceless, shot out of the mirage behind him.

The wallaroo seemed to measure the sun-cracked expanse to the water, yet checking neither the length nor the speed of his leaping. His last leap drove two long toe-marks deep into the firm mud-margin and flung him out, and his shadow beneath him, over the sparkling surface. He struck it and splashed over sideways, head under, but floundered on in lunge after lunge, till the water was up to his heaving chest. Then head and shoulders and half-bent arms streaming wet, he stood erect and faced the pack.

The wild dogs propped to a halt at the muddy edge, fanned and encircled the water. Then all nine squatted, tongues lolling, ears pricked, alerted to see if their prey meant to break or stay.

His long deer-head bobbing to his panting, the wallaroo bent suddenly and gulped some water. There was a queer old-man stoop to his shoulders as he lifted his dripping snout again; the stoop wallaroos get from sleeping curled in cliff crevices, or humped under the overhang of rock ledges.

THE dingoes were a travelling pack from further west. They had surprised him lounging in the black shade of a desert-oak trunk on the ridge that ended the plain a mile to the south. They had flanked him and pressed him close. But, half famished and weary before they found him, they were as glad as he now of a halt to the chase.

One by one, as though called by name, they stepped into the water and drank. Their leader drank last. He was a thick-set brindled brute, speckled bluish grey and white, without a single tawny hair, but a true dingo for all that, and clearly he had sired four of the pack.

He still watched the quarry while he lapped, then splashed out to dry ground, his wet pads soled at once with dampened clay crumbs. He stood side on to the wallaroo and panted some ten seconds longer. Then, from a one-foot pivot, he had sprung back into the sunbright water and was swimming in. The other eight dogs took the water with him.

What followed there in the savage sunblaze was but one death fight of many the wilderness knows. A dingo can pull down both kangaroos and sheep with a slashing sidespring that kills from the sheer shock of the plucked-out flesh. But, for that terrible bite, the dog needs footing, and the wallaroo's foes were swimming.

In water a kangaroo, beset by a single dog or even a pair, can kill them with stabbing hind toes or by thrusting a dog deep under with hands as strong as talons. But as the wallaroo flung to and fro in the blaze of the sun, keeping always chest deep in the water, keeping head and throat clear of the slash of massive jaws, he knew he had no chance against so many; that he could not match their relentless pack fighting.

Again and again his quick hands thrust the nearest dog under, but he dare not hold it there for even a second. Twice already his right arm was slashed, but there could be no pause now to his desperate lunging, for the ring of snarling dogs' heads closed in again and again.

And then, head and shoulders above the dogs, he saw the two men and the gig; saw the smaller man spring over a gig wheel and jerk a rifle to his shoulder.

Three bullets slashed the froth on the water beside him. A red bitch jerked over on her back, shot through the head. A fourth bullet killed a tawny dog and the brute gasped as it sank. Then the shooter was fumbling for more shells and the pack was swimming out to the margin furthest from the men. The wallaroo watched stupidly as he gulped in his breath; saw seven bodies, lean from the cling of wet fur, find footing on the dry clay. The man fired again and yet again and missed both times; and then the dogs vanished one by one into the lapping mirage and headed back to the ridge on the south side.

The little bushman with the rifle looked after them a moment, then bent, unhurried, and puffed a wisp of white smoke from the slender barrel into the sun. Behind him the two-wheeled gig was moving forward a foot at a time as a big roan horse fought the bit and strained towards the water. But his driver, a burly fellow with a red stubble for a beard, jerked him back on his haunches and scowled.

"Plug the wallaroo now. What the heck are y' waitin' for?"

"Not me, Jake! Not after the show the poor beggar was puttin' up. Nine of 'em on to him and he was doin' fine! Give me a rock roo for a fight to a finish. But the pack had him done in at that. Look at 'im pant, poor devil. Lucky for 'im that Marrabee boundary rider told us there was some water in the low end o' this claypan or I'd've took the long road round to Caldwell instead o' shortcuttin' this way. Well, better take Roany out o' the shafts an' water him while I fish out them two dogs an' scalp 'em. I should've had another three, but s'elp me, I can't shoot no more."

He stopped and waved his rifle at the wallaroo.

"An' there goes the rocky."

For now, at last, the wallaroo moved. He floundered out to the opposite bank, the way the dogs had gone. On the hard ground, he hopped away, but in two hundred yards his panting lungs slowed him and stopped him. He turned then, sitting back on hind legs and bowed tail.

THE burly redhead had at last climbed out in front of the off-side wheel and was leaning against a shaft, rolling a cigarette. He glanced once at the rifle where Mason had laid it down, but apparently decided it wasn't worth while trying for a shot at the wallaroo. But his eyes were surly.

Jake Williams preferred robbery to work, even for good wages. Robbery with a little violence, if necessary, though never with a gun and never, for that matter, with a real risk attached. The pickings were smaller that way, but a man didn't have to sweat, thinking he might go up for two years or ten. It was bar-room talk that had brought him at last five hundred miles west to White Springs, the lure of thousands filling his mind. He had persuaded Mason to take him as a mate on this prospecting trip, offering his last pound towards expenses. And for three months now he'd bullocked with Mason in shaft after shaft and in one useless tunnel after another. For three months; and for what? Lord!

The little man, up to his waist in the water, was moving out, towing the two dead dogs by their tails. Presently they lay together, sopping wet on the hard-baked clay, a few yards from Jake. Mason guided muddy feet carefully through his trouser legs and donned his shirt. Both garments had lost their dyes from many washings and were stained, instead, with tunnel earth.

"Hand us down the big water billy, Jake. Got enough mud on me feet to start a slag heap. An' take ole Roany out. If he snoops into the water, gig and all, he'll slip over an' lay on a shaft an' bust it, nothin' surer."

"Be a pity, wouldn't it! The shafts is mostly splints an' wire now!" Williams looked across the pulsing sea-mirage to the low, timbered ridge. What he saw changed his surliness to anger. "Gawd, what a country! Prospect country, y' call it! Well, either the country's wrong or you're a damn lot wrong! Three months' bullockin', eatin' dough-cakes an' rabbits the last month, three meals a day, an' not fifty cents worth of anythin' to show for the lot! Not even a man's train ticket back to the coast! Nothin'!"

From where he squatted, the little bushman was watching the speaker, his eyes suddenly half-closed and wary. Then he was grinning again and replied without rancour:

"Lord, Jake, I warned y'. A whole lot o' prospectin' trips is mostly hard work for nothing. Lookin' for gold or opals or anything else, y' gotter know what to look for in the way o' signs. But y' gotter have luck, too; a heck of a lot o' luck. Which is why I warned y' when you wanted to divvy in for the trip."

He jerked his stained felt hat forward over his eyes, propped both arms behind him and, still grinning, looked up steadily into the redhead's face.

"Anyhow y' can have these two dog scalps. They're worth a pound each at the Caldwell Police Station an' I reckon, between us, we can dig up your fare back to Brisbane. But look, now we come this 'ere short cut, what's wrong with headin' across and campin' on that sandstone ridge an' I'll give it a walk-over this arvo. None o' this country's been close-combed yet. We got enough flour left for three days easy, so we can try one more shaft an'——"

"One more?"

The words seemed to stick in the big man's throat and Mason read his answer in his blazing eyes. He watched them warily, but his own were unafraid as he laughed softly.

"Okay, Jake, if y' feel as bad as that about it. We'll push on back to Caldwell like we decided. It's thirty mile yet, but we'll make it be dark; and there's a train out tomorrer."

The other grunted, struck a match fiercely and lit his cigarette. He bent beneath a cloud of blue smoke to jerk a fire-blackened billy-can from under the seat of the gig. Then, while the little man dipped water and sat down again to sluice the mud from his feet, he undid traces and breeching and finally rolled the heavily loaded gig back clear of the horse. At once the old roan, of his own accord, followed a cattle pad to the corner where the surround of mud was narrowest, moved in cautiously and thrust his nose deep.

Mason pulled on his boots, drew a clasp knife from his pocket and bent over the first of the dogs.

"Struth, I never thought to come on a pack o' dingoes on Marrabee cattle run. From what I hear they got the best dog fences in Queensland—a pack o' nine dogs, mind y'!"

SCALPING a dingo is no matter of two or three knife cuts. The "scalp" must include the skin of the cranium together with both ears and a long strip right back to the tail if the Pastures Protection bonus is to be claimed. Mason talked on as his keen knife blade slid under the pelt of the she-dingo. His companion made no sign that he even heard him. But suddenly his eyes narrowed as though in swift speculation. Without looking round he slowly stubbed his part-smoked cigarette on the sloping shaft.

In those few seconds his decision was made. He turned with a quick, yet stealthy movement, strange in one of his bulk, reached one hand into a box in the tilted gig and drew out a calico bag of salt. His vast hand closed tightly round the slack neck of it. Then, with a glance upward at the sun, he was behind the kneeling Mason in two noiseless strides. The little man was still talking:

"A powerful brute, this one, Jake. And they're all smart, these dingoes, let me tell y', especially when they takes to pack huntin'. I remember one time out on Capparoo seein' a whole flamin' pack go to cover to——"

But Jake Williams had struck. It was a blow delivered with the skill of a back-alley thug. Mason slumped forward beside the dog he was skinning, his floppy felt hat yawing clear of his grey hair. His red-smeared knife, left behind in the last slit it had made, slid out gently till its handle tamped down on the hot ground.

The wallaroo, peering from out in the mirage, saw Williams fumbling with Mason's coat, draped on the sulky seat. The redhead found what he sought, then tossed the coat down so that it spread and covered the bushman's head. From the floor of the gig he dragged out and threw down a rolled blanket, then lifted and dumped down a box that tipped and spilled a tea tin and several other tins on to the clay. He unhooked a canvas waterbag and set it beside the box.

Finally, from the cast-iron spring bracket at the rear of the sulky he jerked clear an assortment of digging tools that clinked as they tumbled one on the other on the ground—two little one-handed picks with shiny points, a shovel with an absurdly short handle, four tamping drills, a windlass handle, an earthy coil of wire cable with a knot of light rope tied to it. Williams spat as he scowled down at them.

Five minutes later, the stiff-legged old gelding once more between the shafts, he clambered up and drove off—not directly towards the ridge, but following the one faint track that led on from the claypan south-west.

HIS panting stopped at last, the wallaroo watched till man, horse and gig became a single blotch that lurched drunkenly in the mirage. But the silence brought him only unease now. He had never before been out on this heat-bedevilled plain in daylight; and his testing of the fiery air told him that, between him and the rocks of his ridge, the dog pack had gone to cover.

His sure warning of the danger made Mason's motionless figure somehow significant to him. He bent and, small hands to the sheeny, bare ground, shambled forward slowly.

But, a hundred yards from the waterhole he would go no closer; and, presently, from there, he saw Mason sit up slowly and drag the coat from his head.

It was five minutes more before the prospector's sight cleared. Then his first thought was for his wallet. He jerked it out of his coat pocket and

opened it. He nodded slowly, closed it and threw it down on the bunched up coat, rose shakily and made his way across to the water. He bathed head and torso, sopping his hair and his shoulders. He came back slowly, frowning a little.

He'd been waiting for this, and then hanged if Williams hadn't got him after all. The swine must have seen him put his wallet in his coat pocket when they were breaking camp — and there'd been £20 in the wallet. Now Jake had it.

He'd leave the horse and gig in the scrub near Caldwell and maybe thumb a ride some o' the way east an' board the train to-morrow. If he met anybody on the way to Caldwell who knew old Roany and the outfit he could say he was goin' in for supplies. They'd believe him, seeing no tools or gear on the gig. And the swine had reckoned to stave off trouble, leaving him grub and things and even covering his head, so the sun wouldn't get him before he came round. Lord yes, the big pilfering brute was playing safe all the way.

The bushman picked up his coat again and drew a pipe from one pocket. Then he saw the wallaroo and grinned.

"Well, it looks like we both been done over, pal! But are we dead? We ain't, an' that's the main thing, let me tell y'!"

HE picked his knife off the ground and finished scalping the dogs, then, having washed his hands, set about cheerfully preparing a meal, boiling his billy with an armful of herbage stalks brought from beyond the edge of the claypan. His meal finished, he sluiced again in the muddy pool, soaked his felt hat and thrust it sopping on his head. Finally he selected some of the tools and other gear and rolled them into a heavy swag which he tied tightly with a rolled strip cut from the blanket. That done, he worked the big galling pack high across his shoulders with a blanket loop, gathered up rifle, billy and water bag and trudged off, not following the track, but heading straight for the ridge.

The wallaroo watched him till only his head and shoulders and the top of the big swag were bobbing above the mirage. But now the fiery wind puffs brought the scent of the dogs no longer, for the pack, having rested an hour in the first cover the timber offered, had jogged off along the ridge to the eastward, to hole up in a gully end till night.

Having drunk once more, the wallaroo moved slowly towards the ridge. Once off the claypan and amongst the sparse white grass, he plucked handful after handful of the tindery stalks and munched busily as he half-hopped along. Twice he stopped, dug out a tuft and munched the roots, then changed his shamble for easy hopping till the scent of the man ahead was plain once more. He did not know this man had spared his life. It was simply that, to his keen nose, keener than a fox's, there was mixed with the man smell and the smell of the man's burden a faint scent that he knew; a certain tenacious sweetness he could never fail to know; and each time it came it brought him reassurance.

It was little more than a mile to where the light timber of the ridge stopped short at the plain's edge. But humping the awkward pack in that heat was proving too much for Mason. At shorter and shorter intervals he had to set it down and rest and it was nearly an hour before he made the timber. He trudged up through the first of the trees and at last slipped the swag with a gasp of relief beneath the one good shade tree of them all—the desert-oak the wallaroo had left three hours ago.

The wallaroo, peering warily from well out on the plain, tested the air again for the dogs. When his twitching nostrils made him sure they were nowhere ahead, he made a close detour past the man sprawled now on the sparsely-grassed ground at the tree butt and thumped away up the ridge.

The timber grew thicker as the slope steepened till, just below a sandstone outcrop, he came to a clump of whipstick pines. He thumped past it, eyes and nose alert, then straight up to the sheer rock. And suddenly he seemed to acquire an agility his stocky build belied; for he leapt up eight feet to a narrow, out-tilted ledge on the cliff face. Then, with only that precarious footing to hold him to the sheer rock, he hopped nonchalantly up and along for nearly forty feet. There he paused again, twisting his humped shoulders to look down-ridge towards Mason.

He tested the air, but from habit, not from unease, for no dog could reach this ledge from below or above, nor could it hold footing on the tilted rock his roughened pads gripped firmly. A moment more he stared out and down through the timber, a startlingly old-man figure stooped over half-bent arms. Then he turned again and squeezed into a crevice behind him. He made his way further and further in, several times having to squeeze his bulky body again between the crevice walls. Then suddenly the crevice widened and he shambled forward into the dimness of a cave.

MASON'S head was throbbing, for the blow that had kept him unconscious for nearly an hour had yet to take its toll. He lit a small fire and made some tea again and presently, with a glance at the water-bag, still well filled, he spread a blanket, pillowed his head on his coat, and at last dropped off to sleep. The long afternoon slept, too, the hot air among the trees heavy with the fraggrance of leaf oils.

At sunset he woke, his head pain gone. But now, despite his sleep, lassitude dragged at his limbs. He knew that for reaction. Lord, thirty year ago a crack on the head wouldn't've set a man back this way! Moving slowly, he made up a fire and ate a scanty meal, then lit his pipe and lay back on his blanket.

Well, what was next? No good at all trying to push on to-night. Jake'd get clear away, the swine, but no darned use worrying about that now. An early morning start was the only thing, and find poor old Roany as soon as he could.

He'd start in the morning, travelling light, leaving these tools he'd brought from the claypan and some of his gear. A bad trip, this one. Everything seemed to go wrong from the day he'd been fool enough to think that big, hefty redhead would be a useful mate. But this prospecting gave a man a heck of a spin when the luck stayed wrong all the time and you didn't even make wages. The luck was the trouble, all along the line. You knew your rock chemistry, knew the formations, but you had to have the luck your way. Darn it, he'd known men, hardly able to read the clearest signs, stumble on big strikes!

He sighed, set his pipe on a stone beside his blanket, and turned on his side. No. Ten pound in the bank and a couple o' dingo scalps wasn't much of a finish to a trip. He'd heard Marrabee cattle run wanted their stock wells way over on the east side cleaned out. Better take the job if he could get it. Come to think of it, the Marrabee mob would be sore about those dogs getting through their west boundary. Wonder where the pack had holed up?

THE pack left the gully head at dusk and jogged right out to the claypan to drink. The wedge-tailed eagles had left little enough of the two dogs Mason had shot. But dingoes fear the crack of rifle shots more than all else and the shooting of the morning had made the leader nervous —half-minded to return to-night to his own hunting grounds. It decided him against travelling on farther east. He led the pack in off the plain to hunt the two miles of the ridge to the west of Mason's camp.

Hunting silently all night, they killed again and again, till all were full fed. Then, just before dawn, the leader came on the wallaroo's trail leading up past the camp to the cliff. Found earlier, after half a day's heat, it would have been too faint to halt him, but now the light dew had freshened its scent. He knew it. Only guns will turn a dingo from a trail. It is his habit to hold to it, day and night if he must, till he kills.

Next moment, the big brindled brute flung his pack call through the trees and up to the star-packed sky.

Mason slept on; but the wallaroo heard it. His wound had stiffened and his right side hurt when he moved. Though a night feeder, he had fed well enough on his slow journey off the plain. He rose once and drank from a rock seepage in a crevice, then returned and slept again.

But his hunger was keen when, in the cool dawn, he stood on the ledge in the face of the sandstone outcrop and looked again down the ridge. He could catch no scent of the dingoes but, with the dawn breeze now from the west, that told him only that they were nowhere to the westward. Down through the timber he could see the smoke spiral of Mason's fire stirred to life.

With a last questing tilt of his broad snout, he leapt from the rock ledge, landed with a soft thud on the tuft grass below, and shambled away slowly, now and then pausing and stretching his neck to bite off a bunch of woody seed cups from a gum branch.

He was almost past the pine clump before the pack sprang

(Please turn to page 23)

COMMAND

By J. E. MACDONELL

BROWN smoke-haze flat at her funnel-lip, the destroyer splintered each comber into acres of white, slipped headlong into the deep hollow beyond, and regained her pace with cataracts spilling from her foc's'le like long grey beards flowing in the wind.

She dipped again; her knife of a stem bit into the approaching wall of apparent liquidity. She shuddered, and a lather of spray swept the bridge. It flew over the first-lieutenant crouched under the fore wind-break, and beat fair into the wind-weathered face of the captain standing upright behind his binnacle.

The captain was looking, physically, ahead over the troughs of tumbling brine. Mentally, you're sneering at me, thought the first-lieutenant bitterly. That's right—the perfect example to junior officers. Standing up taking it full in your dial. Well, you can take it as far as I'm concerned—and I hope it freezes your hook nose off!

"Number One!"

The first-lieutenant jerked; had the old battle-axe read his thoughts? Wouldn't be surprised—he could judge a bearing by eye to within five degrees.

"Sir?"

"Before you get a permanent bend in your spine down there, you might be good enough to check the ship's position. If you slide on your belly across the grating you won't get wet."

Blast you! You know damned well I checked her ten minutes ago. The first-lieutenant handled himself across the bridge to the canvas-covered chart-table. But, of course, *you* must have your precious command's position put on the map every ten minutes. Every twenty did for the flotilla-captain. But not you. The first-lieutenant swore as his wet oilskin sleeve smeared the virgin whiteness of the chart, where a pencil-point with a circle round it pin-pointed the ship's position ten minutes back on the ridged expanse of the Sea of Japan. If I ever worry about the rings on my arm like you, he thought, hearing the captain's warning to the helmsman to watch his steering, I'll jump on the guard-rails and take one step outboard.

He noted a well-defined cape on the chart abreast their calculated position and drew his fathom or so of rangy length back from the chart-table to identify the cape on the looming mass of Korea to starb'd. The captain stepped down from behind the binnacle to let him take his bearings.

Watching the figure crouched over the gyro bearing-sight, the captain waited to resume his position. The first-lieutenant took his time—it was not easy to get the tiny "V" of his bearing-sight steady on the jutting cape, with the ship plunging and almost continuous gusts of spray obscuring his vision. The captain jerked impatiently.

"Number One!"

Hell, what now? The first-lieutenant came up, and looked at him. The captain hesitated, then shut his mouth abruptly and walked to the chart-table, resting his arms on its wet top and staring out over the foc's'le. There was torture in his face.

DAMN my bitterness! Why must I always pick at them? God knows I don't want to. You think I don't know what you all think of me? His hand clenched. And I can't tell you what's nagging me—you don't talk about those things. None of you have ever been court-martialled. For piling your brand-new ship high on a coast—just like this one. In a gale, too. Standing before a court glittering with gold-braid in the quiet judicial atmosphere of a closed room. There was no screeching wind, no slap and smother of malignant seas and visibility-reducing mist to mar the judgment of *that* gold-braid! Damn them! Hadn't they been in a gale? That was the trouble; they had—and they had brought their ships through it. Not ripped her guts out on a sub-surface snag of rock.

Finished his bearings, the first-lieutenant watched his captain, waiting to get into the chart. He saw the Old Man take another faceful of salt, unflinching. That's the boy—men of oak and all that—bosh!

But the captain had hardly felt the whip of the spray. He was coming back—as he had every night for the past fortnight — into the court-martial room, to hear their judgment. He'd sworn to himself he would look the president of the court full in the eyes, and not stare in cringing anticipation of that judgment at the sword (his sword) laid out on the table before the president. Yet his eyes had dropped to it; a flood of feeling had surged through him as he saw the hilt towards him. Not guilty!

"Excuse me, sir!"

Then the president's judgment. *Having heard the evidence . . . it is the opinion of the court, considering the uncharted set of a strong current in that area, and an uncharted ledge, that the stranding of H.M.A.S. "Searcher" was not the fault of her commanding officer. He is therefore exonerated. However, it must be stressed that, in waters where it is suspected that available charts do not cover fully prevailing conditions, commanding officers must exercise the greatest caution in . . .*

"Excuse me, sir!"

The captain swung his head.

"I'd like to get these bearings on the chart, sir."

"Oh, sorry, Number One."

The Old Man pulled back. The first-lieutenant stared a moment at the look on his face, then buried his own head under the canvas dodger. He drew three swift black lines from shore to sea. What in blazes was the old nuisance thinking about to give him that look? Number One circled the intersection of the lines, and pencilled a time nearby, thus fixing the ship. Something wrong — that "Sorry, Number One" was almost normal . . .

So much so that he ventured a remark as he pulled out from under the streaming canvas.

"Never seen a chart so bare, sir. They've marked the coast, and that's about all."

"What?"

Number One raised his voice above the howl of the wind.

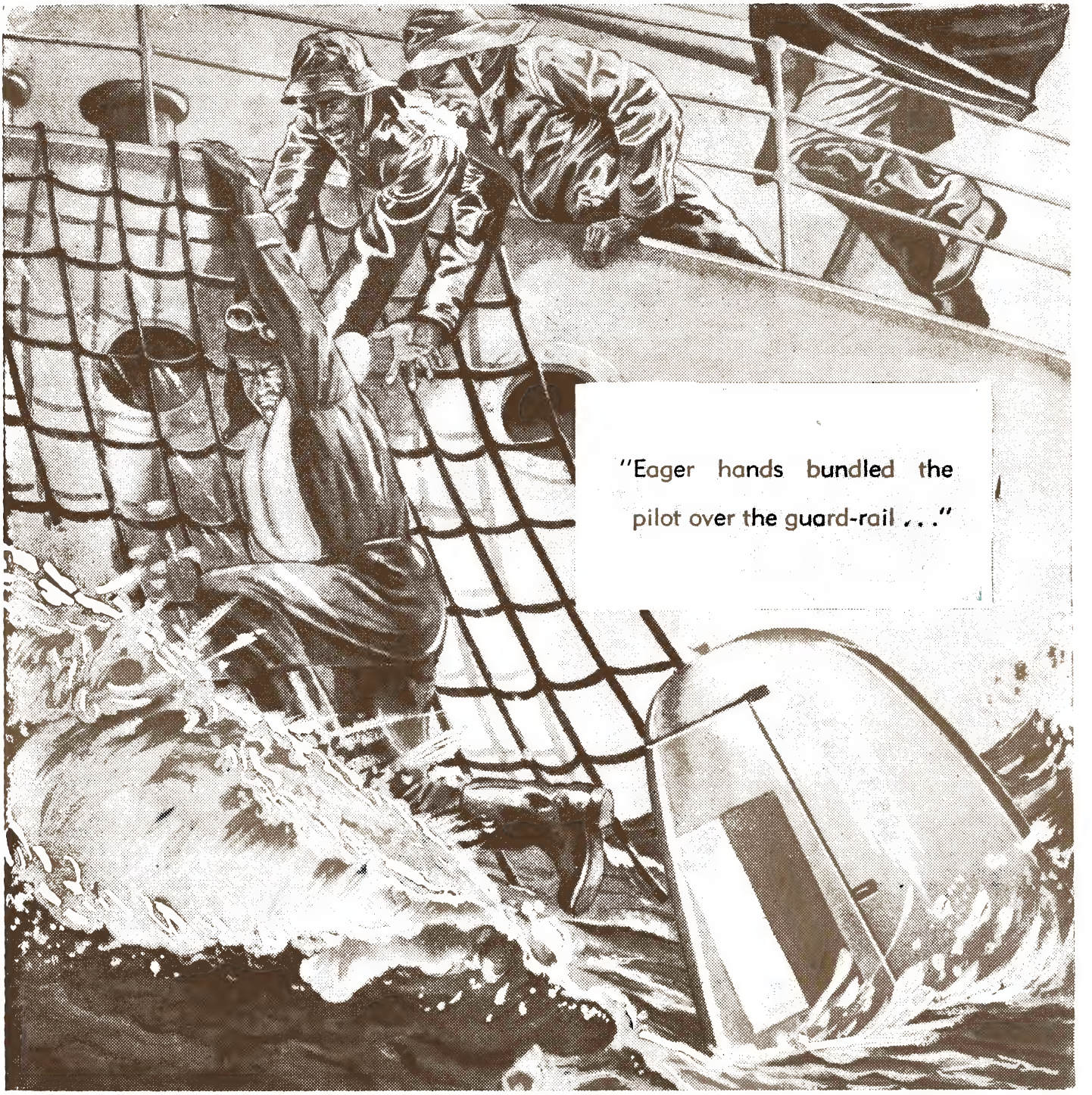
"Just mentioned the lack of soundings on the chart, sir."

"Yes, I heard you." He was about to add, "There's no need to bellow your fool head off," but bit the words off. God, how long before he could relax again? Three weeks now since his trial, and the disbelief with which he'd read that signal the next day.

"Lieutenant-commander S. H. Brewster appointed to "Swordsman," in command. Effective forthwith. Acknowledgement to be made by signal."

That recognition of his competence should have settled

Very few people have to shoulder the blame for things they cannot help, but the captain of a ship is always responsible for what happens to her—even when he isn't.



his turmoil. It had vindicated him in the eyes of the Fleet. But you don't pile up a quarter of a million pounds' worth of destroyer every day; you don't feel her graceful beauty crunching and grinding to a tortured mess under your feet without being shaken out of the casual efficiency which hitherto had been your main happy characteristic. What he wanted—with a certainty that was almost an ache—was some action, some manoeuvre, a chance which, like a crashed pilot going up again, would restore his confidence in his seamanship. And break down the atmosphere which, since his coming to this ship, had made a cosy little hell of the ward-room.

THE captain had never thought about his problem quite like this before. Perhaps he'd been too full of its actuality within him to worry about its effect on others of his command. On his last bridge his presence had not been the signal for an instant tightening-up of the bridge personnel, from the first-lieutenant and commissioned-gunner to the signalman and bosun's mate. There he had been accepted, with respect, as having the most complete right to be there, by virtue of his experience and authority. There the bosun's mate became busy with a bit of brightwork, as became his captain's presence, and the officer of the watch had cheerfully commented or cursed the weather, or asked his advice on a current expected ahead. Here, the bosun's mate found he had a message to run; the tensioning of the officer of the watch was physically noticeable. He felt they breathed a collective sigh of relief as soon as he'd stamped below again.

He looked at the first-lieutenant now — gazing stead-

fastly ahead, tall and uncommunicative near the chart-table. Every few minutes he glanced at his watch, waiting for the next ten-minute checking, stubbornly determined he would not be caught again. And then the captain felt, suddenly, as he never had before, the remoteness, the lonely privilege, of command.

HE turned to the first-lieutenant. He had no idea what he would say — just knew that he wanted to say something, to break down that disciplined, respectful and completely self-willed aloofness of his second-in-command.

His mouth was open when a voice, urgent but not scared, sprang like a disembodied being from a voice-pipe.

"Radar-office—bridge"

Instantly the first-lieutenant answered:

"Bridge."

"Contact bearing Green two-oh. Angle of sight three-five. Range one-double-oh. Aircraft!"

His hip wedged against the binnacle, the captain raked the leaden sky with his binoculars. Range five miles. He couldn't expect to sight him against that background, but the reaction was instinctive. He lowered his glasses.

"Identification, Number One?"

The first-lieutenant had his ear to the voice-pipe.

"Finding out, sir." He waited a moment, listened to the message reaching the voice-pipe which ran like a nerve to the radar-office, and straightened up.

"Friendly, sir."

The captain relaxed. "It would be. Just what we wanted — single aircraft, no friends, nice practise run for the guns." He grinned.

The first-lieutenant hid, he hoped, his surprise. He realised, with a slight shock, that this was the first time he'd seen the captain smile. This was becoming a watch to remember! When you see a physically-close shipmate widen his mouth for the first time in the fortnight you've known him, the reaction is apt to call for something. With the first-lieutenant it was a continuance of his captain's line of thought in a sudden rush of conversation.

"I dunno, sir. Intelligence reported a shore battery just south of here. We might get a round or two off after all."

He stepped up beside the captain on to the grating near the compass, hanging on as she rolled.

"Excuse me, sir — time to check."

The captain was almost off the grating when the starb'd lookout cried, sharply.

"Bridge! Aircraft bearing green three-oh. On fire!"

The captain acted with a cold, instant certainty. One reason why he had been given another command. He shoved the first-lieutenant clear, bent to the voice-pipe and bellowed:

"Starb'd 20! Full ahead together!"

Before the echo of the answering engine-room bells had pealed away her slim bow was coming round, aiming at a smoke-streaming object over the coast to starb'd, which was heading in a shallow, helpless dive towards the sea. Its condition was something the omniscient radar had not been able to tell them.

Number One had the burning plane in his glasses.

"Firefly, sir. One of ours. If he can't pull out, the sea's got him. Just to the right—"

THE captain interrupted tersely. He was not interested in who or why; his mind was filled with distances, speeds, steering. And as he rapped his orders a lifting elation filled him. There was no question that he would get that plane. The threat of breakers, reefs — and shore batteries—was merely something he was aware of, and his seamanship would overcome. And there was more to the captain in this evolution than a matter of seamanship.

"Wheelhouse! Steer for that plane."

It might have occurred to him that that was surely one of the strangest orders to be passed from a bridge. But the plane was low now, a bat-winged shape at the point of a stretching plume of black smoke, trailing astern of it in a graceful arc against the lighter grey of the sky.

The ship was shuddering with speed, flinging the spray back over her nose in wind-driven sheets. She rolled as she sliced, and a wall of water lifted over her lee gunwale, hung poised a moment, then fell in an avalanche of green over the foc'sle. But she was built for these seas, designed by an age of battling against them. She shook the water from her scuppers in cascades of lace, and bucketed on.

Watching, they saw the plane strike, half a mile ahead. At almost the same time they saw four little blinks of light, bright against the sombre background of hills. The shells lobbed well over, their entry scarcely marked in the overall wilderness of green and white.

"Come on, Number One—get those guns closed up!"

The first-lieutenant jumped —so justified was the asperity in the Old Man's voice that he felt no resentment of it. The first-lieutenant is responsible to the captain for the gunnery efficiency of the ship. A shore battery had landed its first salvo, and was certainly loading its next, and he had done nothing about it. He reached the alarm buzzer on the fore-end of the bridge, found it with his thumb, and pressed hard.

SMOOTHLY the ship swung into action. Number One was not worried about spray now. He poked his streaming face above the wind-break, and in a voice trained to clarity in ocean gales roared at A-gun — quicker than passing it through the gunnery-control director.

"A-gun! Provide grapnels on the foc'sle. And the four-inch grass. Stand-by to hook that plane. Get a scrambling-net ready for the pilot."

He snatched a look at the wallowing plane, now clearly visible straight ahead. Noted the line of spray exploding in an unbroken wall a few yards behind the plane. Reef. He turned to the bosun's mate.

"Get the navigator's yeoman closed-up on the echo-sounder. Start operating immediately."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The youngster tumbled urgently down the ladder.

In the few minutes this procedure had taken all guns had closed-up, and were now sniffing across the sea towards the hills, following the master-eye in the director above the bridge. In instant echo to the next quartet of flashes ashore came the director-officer's shout:

"Director, target!"

The captain nodded to Number One, who turned to the director phone-number.

With the plane two hundred yards ahead, the captain forgot the guns. He was the brains of the *ship* now — no matter where he turned her, the guns could train and look after their own problem. So their opening roar made him jump from his crouch over his bearing-sight. Then he forgot them again, the experience of years judging, guiding, slowing her down as she sloughed and sliced up to where a helmeted figure waved from a cockpit almost awash.

She was coming round nicely, with exactly the right helm to allow for wind and sea. Then a shout came from the echo-sounder in the chart-house below.

"Depth three and a half fathoms, sir!"

Twenty-one feet—she drew eighteen! As the captain bent to the wheelhouse voice-pipe a shell exploded in a vicious slam of splinters on the funnel. One sliver struck the siren—it gurgled, cleared its throat, and gave tongue unchecked in a jarring screech of sound.

"Full astern together!" He waited for the repeat of the order. Then: "Tell the engine-room to shut off steam to both sirens."

Number One had a moment to record a memory of the captain. It was a scene he would not forget. The crash of waves battering her sides; the mast sweeping in crazy arcs across the sky; the siren screeching, high-pitched accompaniment to the timed crash of all six guns; and the captain, erect, clutching his binnacle, oblivious to everything but the widening gap between his bow and the spreadeagled figure on the plane, now up to his shoulders in water.

Then the siren wheezed, spluttered, and fell silent. The relief was almost physical. It was broken by Number One's shout.

"Hit, sir! Looks like their ammunition."

If the Old Man heard, he gave no sign. He was at the voice-pipe, the extension of his eye and brain, reaching to her rudder and 40,000 boiler-room horses.

"Stop both. Slow ahead together. Steady as you go!"

The first-lieutenant was intent on his job. This was the perfect example, if he'd stopped to think, of a fighting ship's two main purposes — gunnery and seamanship. And so well-drilled was she that both were being exercised simultaneously—and, so far as Number One was concerned, efficiently. He stared at the billowing mushroom of smoke marking the target—ammunition, and plenty of it, judged by that junior Bikini. There would be little left of the battery. He let the guns loose another broadside and ordered:

"Cease fire."

WITH the consciousness of a job well done Number One turned to the other drama—and stared aghast. Almost directly ahead of them,

so close you could heave a spud, reared the wall of exploding spray where the rollers ended their run on the reef. Fascinated, he watched a wave recoil, to bare the glistening, waiting teeth. He looked at the captain. The Old Man was listening, not to the echo-sounder reports, but to his anti-submarine asdic-set. The cheese-shaped sonic beam, shafting out, had told him that the reef dropped sheer under the sea for several hundred feet, a sub-terranean cliff. And that between the three and a half fathom ridge near the plane and the reef, water stretched deep. There was one other thing, which Number One was quick to grasp. Also between the plane and the reef was a bare ship's length.

The first-lieutenant was an experienced second-in-command. He would not have lasted a dog-watch in a destroyer if he had not been. And, being a destroyer man, he had seen seamanship at its best. Or thought he had. That he was learning; he was now watching a master.

Slowly, with infinite care, the Old Man swung her. Round, judging in advance the slap of wind and sea. It was as much the efficiency of his predecessor on test as it was his own—the least delay, the slightest mistake in the execution of the captain's orders, in wheel-house or engine-room, and she was up.

The first-lieutenant wrenched his stare from the reef and jumped to the fore-end of the bridge. The plane was almost under the bow. He looked at the captain, at the strain on his face, went to ask, then, deciding, ran down the ladder and forrard on to the foc's'le.

Number One looked over the guard-rail into a salt-caked face, its eyes red-rimmed. The quick grins on each face said all there was to say. Then the grapnel was over, hooking its prongs under the plane's propeller boss, already well under water. A-gun's crew took hold, and heaved.

"Hold it at that. Scrambling-net. Smack it about!"

The big rope net rolled down, its edge striking the pilot on the shoulder. Eager hands bundled him over the guard-rail.

"Observer?" queried Number One.

"No use. He was gone—flak—before we hit."

"Right. Unhook grapnel!"

"Can't, sir—it's caught."

"Cast it loose, then. Come on, man. Move!"

Number One turned to the captain of the gun.

"Petty-officer Brady, take this officer to the wardroom. Hold on—you all right, old boy? Good. Wardroom, Brady. Tell the doctor and steward. Excuse me now, won't you? We've got to get out of this yet."

She was already swinging when Number One made the bridge. He spoke briefly.

"Pilot aboard, sir. Observer dead."

THE Old Man nodded, his eye on his bow. Under hard-over rudder and opposite-working screws she was swinging, slowly, with no forward movement — she could afford none. Now and again a wave rearing against the flares of her bow would halt her. Then the grip of the screws dragged her round again, patient, indomitable, spinning with a quiet, giant strength.

A final roll and she was round, stern to the reef, the sub-surface ridge clear on her port bow. The captain listened for the echo-sounder.

"Forty fathoms, sir. Fifty fathoms. Fifty-five . . ."

"Half ahead together."

He straightened, and wiped his eyes; a tired, instinctive movement, almost like a child's. Twenty years' experience had been concentrated on those few minutes, when an order to the wheel given five seconds too soon or too late would have meant disaster. Number One felt a queer, almost passionate sympathy. Only a seaman could understand that effort.

He stepped forward. The captain heard him, and turned, a faint smile relieving the white rime of salt on his face.

"All right, Number One—you can fall out action stations. Then go below and have a look at that johnny."

"Yes, sir. I—er—" Number One floundered. A first-lieutenant does not usually compliment his captain on his ability. "I'd like to say, sir—that was damned fine seamanship!"

The Old Man's smile widened.

"Thanks, Number One. It was a bit close."

He listened to the other's sea-boots clumping down the ladder, and turned back to the binnacle, pulling out a damp packet of cigarettes. He slapped his pockets.

"Match, sir?"

The bosun's mate was beside him, on the raised, sacrosanct grating, a box in his hand. The captain looked at him, then lowered his eyes to hide the ridiculous light in their tiredness. He took the match, lit up, and drew deeply. ●

Open Sesame

(Continued from page 19)

from their ambush. As he flung away in a bound, the brindle leader and a yellowish dog fanned out on either flank and his chance to double was gone.

The dogs were rested and only the ground slope to aid his leaps kept the kangaroo his brief lead. Tree trunks, pine boughs, fallen tree heads flashed past or beneath him, the thudding of his long leaps loud among the timber.

AND then all in a moment the danger was past. Mason, rolling his swag, heard the thudding, looked up and saw both the dogs and the red wallaroo. He snatched up his thirty-two. With the timbered ridge for soundboard, the shot came like a thunder crack. The pack-leader wheeled in a stride from the bullet's viperish whine and the pack swung with him. When the rifle's echo crashed back from the rocks the dogs were gone; and gone this time for good.

The wallaroo pounded on down, circled left below the camp fire and was well up the ridge again before he slowed and finally shambled to a halt beside a tall blue gum. But his blood still pulsed hard from his fright and his hunger was forgotten. Just then the sun's rim cut the horizon, and the crown of the sandstone outcrop, lifting above the tree tops, was suddenly shining gold.

The flash of it caught Mason's eye a moment, but he set the rifle against the tree and was turning away when he saw the watcher far up-ridge beside the blue gum. He grinned and seemed on the point of launching into a long speech, then frowned instead. Then, half-frowning, half-amused, he began moving slowly, very slowly, towards him. But he had made scarce a dozen steps when the kangaroo swung about, set hands to the ground, and shambled on up the slope towards the rocks.

IT was perhaps twenty minutes later that, having gone back for light rope and tools, he made a grappling iron of a pick and hauled himself up the ten feet of cliff to the split into which he had seen the wallaroo vanish. And, when he thrust in his head, he caught the scent; a scent, faintly sweet, that was all around as he wormed his way further and further in to where the rock split widened to form a little cave. Humped in a vee of the overhang, far back, the wallaroo watched him enter.

Opal earth is a soft rock, really; a soft grey rock that lies under sandstone. It is toughest right under the sandstone, and will cling there suspended, even when its lower layers have been carved away by water. To one unused to it, its smell is a mere earthiness. But there is a sweetness in it of new-turned soil, faint, but strangely tenacious and permanent, clinging for years to tools or rock sacks or in a gouger's clothes, defying water and washing. And Mason had been an opal-seeker almost all his life.

He found the soft grey rock up under the cave roof. But he found opal potch packed in it; the glinting, valueless opal that lies beside and round the real gems. He found potch, then opals; black opals, firehearted.

Before midday he had a fortune piled on a clean-swept space at the dim-lit cave mouth. Still crouched in the darkness, the wallaroo watched him toss down his gouging tools and potch snips and kneel beside the little pile of uncut gems.

Mason's hand trembled as he groped for his pipe, his mind skimming over events. Rock kangaroos often live in caves. Seeing the wallaroo head back once more for the sandstone outcrop, he had wondered. There just might be a cave up there; and a cave in hard sandstone mostly meant that a softer rock had been seepaged out from under a sandstone layer.

And sometimes—only sometimes—that softer rock was opal earth. Yet that wasn't all or nearly all. How many times had he found and tunnelled out opal earth that held no opals at all—nor even a sign of potch?

"But s'help me, you wasn't foolin' me, pal!" he told the silent watcher. His voice, high pitched and breathless, echoed only in whispers. "An' to think it was just flamin' luck we met!" ●

Happy Birthday

By CLARE BRETON-SMITH

ALL day long he felt depressed and chilled. The feeling had begun early in the morning when he realised that they had all forgotten his birthday. He had been thinking about it for days because he was going to be forty-nine—an age when you stopped imagining yourself as *young* and knew for certain you were getting to be middle-aged.

Once or twice it had been on the tip of his tongue to say something about it to Mary, and yet he had hesitated.

It seemed rather silly to mind about growing old though, of course, the issue went deeper than that. He had begun to see himself through the eyes of his family—as a rather tiresome old darling.

Sometimes he felt it was his own fault. Maybe he was a failure as a husband and a father. Mary often teased him for his lack of romance, his reluctance to pay her compliments, his inability to tell her he loved her.

And when he pointed out that these things were one with the fact he had married her, she would laugh and shake her head, saying that was no answer.

The children, too—did they find him lacking?

Meg was twenty-three and still single, a thin, rather sad girl. He had often tried to get her to talk to him, but always found himself doing the talking instead. Meg was odd. She wasn't interested in the things most girls liked and. being an artist, spent every spare moment in the outshed they had turned into a studio.

She was clever at portraits and he'd been bothering her for years to paint her mother, but every time he mentioned it Mary laughed outright and asked who wanted to paint the portrait of a fat, middle-aged woman?

Mary wasn't fat. She was big-boned of course and, during the last few years, her hips had spread a little—but she wasn't *fat*.

After all, she had had four children. . . . Sometimes he wondered if Mary would have been happier had their little Nancy lived.

She had changed since that day and so had he. It had taken him many years to get over the sick feeling he always had whenever he got into the car.

They had been driving down to the seaside for their annual holiday and somehow Nancy had opened the car door and fallen out. . . .

She had been on the border of life and death for weeks—and then she was suddenly gone.

That had been the only real tragedy in their lives together, but it had left a gap that could never be filled.

THOUGH the years had deadened their sorrow, often they would remember their darling little daughter, and tears would come to their eyes.

Always he considered Mary and himself as one—they had the ability to think as one, and that in itself had been a great comfort.

But now he was feeling old and rather useless—he sometimes even doubted Mary's love, and then above all was hurt terribly by his children's thoughtlessness. . . .

It was understandable in a way that he couldn't get on with Meg, but he would have thought he could with Ben and Jimmy. When they had been only youngsters he had worked very hard for their friendship, taking them fishing, spending hours bowling to them or teaching them how to catch.

Since they'd been to college, however, they had drifted apart, and, even though it was his birthday to-day and they were home on holiday, he knew they would not be in that evening.

He had heard Jimmy arranging to meet his girl friend on the telephone this morning. You would have thought on his father's birthday . . .

HE tried to throw off his depression and dictated to his secretary. Her eyes were sympathetic, and she looked as though she might ask him at any moment what was wrong.

He suddenly looked closely at his secretary. Miss Hopkinsons had been with him for nearly fifteen years — since she'd been an excitable little fair-haired girl of twenty-four. How the years flew by!

Why, he thought angrily to himself, did he keep having these spells of morbid reminiscence?

He realised then that he had stopped dictating and was simply staring into space. He coughed, and then looked back at his secretary.

This time she did ask him the question he'd been dreading.

"Is anything wrong, Mr. Harrison? You seem different to-day."

"Nothing, thanks," He wondered what she would say if he answered, "Yes, I'm forty-nine, getting old and no one wants me. I'm just useful to pay bills and give allowances and mend fuses and cut the grass."

He was so vexed with himself for such a stupid piece of self-pity that he went out to lunch—had a beer with his cheese omelette and knew he would regret it.

He was now of an age when he had to think seriously about his daily diet.

Forty-nine. . . . Twenty-nine years ago he had met Mary. He'd been crazily in love with her, inordinately proud of the fact that, though there had been three other men after her, she had chosen to marry him.

She was a pretty girl, sweet and loving, full of a thousand small surprises to please him.

Those first years, before the children came, had been very good — Mary running to the door to greet him eagerly at the end of the day, just as if he had been away for a year instead of about ten hours—Mary standing at the gate in the morning until he reached the end of the road, just so that she could give him one last wave of her hand.

And that reminded him of something that had hurt him this morning.

He had turned round as usual at the end of the road

> George made this discovery on his birthday—he was known as a family man, yet to him his family were strangers.

and Mary had not waited . . . he knew it was a sentimental, foolish habit, but it had always made the day go well for him. Even though it was often cold or Mary had a hundred and one things to do in the house, she had always waited to wave to him.

In those early days they had often walked miles in the moonlight, just holding hands, not talking much but happy to be together. And at week-ends they had sometimes camped out. Mary had been as fond of that as he had.

The children changed their lives, of course.

First Meg. Naturally the first child had a lot of fuss made of it. He had been rather hurt and resentful when Mary had constantly refused to go out with him . . . refused to let his mother or hers mind the baby even once. . . .

But when the two boys came along later he had by that time realised how important it was to a mother to be always with her children . . . Of course, he didn't want to leave the little devils himself—but reasoned that surely Mary and he were entitled to some entertainment.

However, it was not to be and when Nancy had been born and Mary and he had been told there were to be no more children, it had seemed all the better to stay at home each night with the family.

NANCY had made the greatest difference. He wondered what their lives would have been if no tragedy had touched upon them. . . .

No, gradually he had grown to accept the fact that fathers must take second place.

What was it about children that always made women lose their sense of proportion? The children were so precious that they must be guarded, their every wish forestalled. Not that Mary had spoiled them—at least, not too much.

She was a good mother, unexpectedly firm at the times when she thought it was for their own good.

But there was no doubt the children came first. . . .

He had accepted it, had even been philosophically humorous about it. In his heart he had known that it would not be for ever. One day the children would be grown up and would leave home and he would have Mary to himself again, and then everything would be as it was in the beginning . . . just the two of them.

Not that he did not love the children—he did—but—

He stood up, paying his bill hastily and going out. He walked along aimlessly, still thinking far too much of days gone by.

He loved the children too much. He was just a sentimental old fool. It hurt him because they seemed to have no desire to do anything he wanted.

Take that portrait of Mary, for instance. If Meg really loved him. . . . Then Jimmy. Jimmy was as strong as a young ox, but on holiday he lounged about, treating the house as a hotel, never offering a hand with the garden.

When you were forty-nine your muscles weren't what they had been, and every week the mowing of the grass became more of a problem.

HE'D have to do it to-night; Jimmy could do it in half the time, but he'd never think of it and his father was too tired of constantly asking him to do it, to ask him again.

Ben, too. He'd been promising for months—no, years—to put the family stamp collection in order. It was an heirloom, Ben's grandfather having begun it, and it was worth something.

Unfortunately young Ben had been bitten with the stamp craze in his early teens and begun to rearrange the album, then grown tired of the hobby and left it in a frightful muddle. He had hours of leisure now to think of that stamp album, but would he? —No.

He went into the gloomy building, looking with his usual distaste at the drab walls, biting his lip as usual at the way the aged lift rocked and swayed in its slow and always tortuous ascent.

He sat down at his desk and sighed. . . .

Forty-nine years. . . . What had he to show for them all? As a youngster he had been ambitious, but once you started a family you dared not take chances any more. So he'd been stuck with this job and had slowly worked his way up to his own office and a comfortably safe job. Safe, but oh, so boring.

All of life was boring . . . that was a shocking thought. It shouldn't be. He was happily married, had three fine kids, a nice little home, enough savings not to fear the future. . . .

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Miss Hopkinsons was by him.

"A nice cup of tea, Mr. Harrison, and an aspirin. You look really depressed. . . ."

He smiled at her.

"I'm forty-nine to-day, Miss Hopkinsons," he said suddenly.

She shook her head slowly.

"We don't any of us get any younger, do we?" Her hair was streaked with grey. He wondered for a second what sort of life she had outside the office.

He went home by the usual train, walked from the station down the tree-shaded road.

He had a sudden urge to leave everything—everyone—and go to a new foreign place.

ONCE he'd read a book about a chap who'd done just that — taken to painting or something. Now what was the title of that book?

He shook his head absent-mindedly. Even his memory was letting him down.

A neighbour passed by and gave him the customary smile of pleased recognition.

Strange, thought George, that he had been living in the same house for nearly eighteen years yet he didn't know more than half a dozen people living in the same road.

And what really close friends did he have? Friends he could rely on to help him out of any difficulties? There wasn't one now that old Greg had gone. Greg, who had been like a brother to him. . . .

He realised he was becoming rapidly sentimental again and so he walked a little faster.

But it seemed that on his forty-ninth birthday he was destined to recall the past and be a little depressed about his life, because his next line of thought was that he had actually achieved nothing.

He was nearly home now, and usually the ten-minute walk dragged and made him feel tired, but not to-night—he was too busy counting his memories.

He looked at his watch, half-hoping that Mary would be at the gate looking for him. She did that sometimes.

But there was no one at the gate. He thought he saw a movement at one of the windows, and decided it was imagination.

As he put his key in the door it was suddenly flung open and voices chanted, "Happy birthday to you . . . happy birthday, dear father, happy birthday to you. . . ."

Mary was in the doorway, wearing a new blue frock, her hair freshly set, her eyes bright. She held out her hands and said, "Darling, I'm so pleased you hurried home — there's a surprise for you—" Behind her the three children were grouped, Meg between her brothers, all of them singing heartily.

He was so taken aback he said stupidly, "I thought you had forgotten."

"Why, George, darling," Mary kissed him warmly, "as if we would. We just planned a birthday surprise."

Meg hugged him—even Ben and Jimmy kissed him. They took his hat and his neatly rolled umbrella and brief case and marched him into the drawing-room.

There on the table was such a spread as he had not seen in years, and, crowning it all, a magnificent iced cake. It even had his name on it and a few large, red candles.

"There wasn't room for forty-nine candles, Dad," Jimmy grinned.

George was pushed into the best armchair, waited on like any prince. I'm just a sentimental old man, he kept telling himself. But sentimental or not, he knew he was enjoying the fuss they made of him.

Afterwards Jimmy took his arm and led him to the back garden. The grass had been cut and rolled, the edges neatly trimmed.

"Why, Jim. . . . Thanks, son."

"My birthday present is to cut the grass each week during my holidays, see, Dad?"

And Ben came up with a big, brown paper parcel. It proved to be the family stamp album, neatly arranged with a careful index so that any stamp could be found quickly.

"Thanks, Ben." George's voice was thick.

Meg's turn was next. She took her father out to the studio—told him to shut his eyes for a moment and then open them.

He saw the painting of his wife for which he had asked so often, and he caught his breath.

Somehow Meg had captured the smile in her mother's eyes, the cheerfulness of her mouth, the full charm of her expression.

"I couldn't have a nicer present. . . ." He was surprised when Meg hugged him warmly.

He went upstairs to wash, wondering why an air of suppressed excitement still filled the house. Mary had not produced a present. He heard laughter and mutterings and then the front door slammed shut.

The next second a gong sounded — obviously a summons for dinner. He felt quite excited.

Mary was waiting in the dining-room. He stood in the doorway, silent.

The table was laid with the best lace cloth, their few bits of precious glass and silver, and there were red roses in the centre. It was laid for two, and Mary was smiling at him. She whisked the cover off a casserole of curried fish. There was an array of chutney and pickles and an apple meringue on the sideboard.

"My favourite dinner," he said slowly.

Mary came to kiss him. "This is your day, George. Don't you want to know what my birthday present is?" She waited for his smile.

"I've arranged with the children to eat out one night a week so that we can be alone . . . just the two of us. You'll think it is sentimental of me, George, but it used to be such fun when we were alone."

"I don't think it's at all sentimental——" he began.

Then he went over to her and kissed her cheek gently. "Mary dear, I've had such a day. I must confess to you now that I really thought you had forgotten my birthday."

Aware that he sounded slightly childish he hastily added, "It wasn't so much the birthday, but I felt somehow I had failed in life—achieved nothing."

He looked at his wife's lined but still pretty face and said, "Perhaps I shouldn't be telling you all these stupid thoughts of mine, but I knew you'd understand. When I arrived home I knew my life had been a success and nothing else . . ."

There were tears in Mary's eyes as she replied, "Oh, George, so many times have I felt the same way! Eternally looking after the children — washing-up, making the beds—no career for me, I used to say, but now I know I have the best career of all —being the wife of the most wonderful man in the world."

Mary went on eagerly, "George, couldn't we . . . George. . . ." And she blushed and, for a moment, looked like the young girl he had married. "George—there's a full moon to-night. Wouldn't it be nice to go for a walk afterwards?"

"You know, Mary," he said slowly, "that's what I have always loved about you . . . you think of the nicest surprises and they are always the things I want to do most." ●

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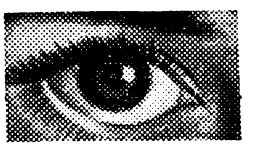

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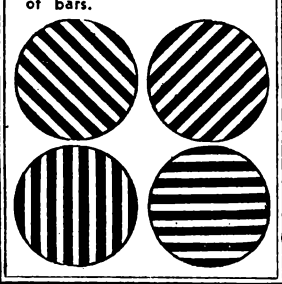

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The Golden Boy

(Continued from page 12)

sell and when to buy. Now it came to him that no man can rule another's life or seek to hold him captive as a portrait of his dead mother. If the lad wished to go, then go he must.

It was a great pity, a saddening thing, but in his experience life was like that even when material affairs prospered and the harvests were rich.

"I do not want you to go, my son," he said, his back resting against the tree. The dark had come down now heavy on the quiet land. "And yet I cannot say you nay. Who is an old man to try to stop a youth who has all the long road to tread? Such an act would be foolish and selfish. So, Mark, my boy, you shall have your share, and go out, yes, even to the Pillars of Hercules. But about these wanderings and voyagings of yours, I am hoping that they will cure you of this restiveness in your soul. That is my hope, and why I give permission and the means to venture forth. Think you it will be so?"

"Father," said Mark, who was a good son and had never loved his father better, "I know not. Truthfully, I have no idea. Yet go I must, and so I must. And I shall ever be grateful for what you have done this eve, since you have set me free, and many the son of a rich man is a slave."

Now Michaelis, at this saying, twined his beard again and after a while he answered, "Dear boy — dear lost boy— there is truth in that, and I didn't know before that you had such wisdom in you. The saying, it may be, proves I still have my wits about me in not keeping you enslaved here in Beersheba. Yes, I was my father's slave, and for all I know my father before me. Yes, Mark, son of Mary, see the world. What comes of it, who knows?"

And suddenly Mark was frightened and abashed by freedom as many have been, and he replied very quietly and solemnly for him, "Who knows, father?"

"Only God," said old Michaelis. "Have you told Ruth of all this?"

"Yes, father, and she would say me if she could, but cannot, of course, being only a woman and there are many such."

"Beyond counting," said old Michaelis out of his years, and yet still only one. However, if it be this is your wish, neither she nor I would deny you. So be it."

III

THE sun was very bright in Alexandria that morning, striking down from an azure sky to an azure sea. Between the long arms of the breakwater—arms as white as those of a skeleton bleached by the desert—the waters glittered as if sprinkled with pieces of glass.

The galley nosed its way into one of the few vacant berths at the busy quay and made fast. The captain and his men were sorry to part with the young countryman who had come out of Israel. He was ever ready to stand a glass or lose in a gamble. In fact, he spent money like a drunken sailor.

The Alexandria run was new to them, so that they could give him no advice about the place, but they wished him well and sent a friendly cheer after him.

So Mary's son and Michaelis' prodigal, felt like a conquering Cæsar as he walked down the plank and entered into Egypt. Yet when he left the small, friendly world of the ship behind, where everybody had known him and he had been as much at home as on the farm, a lost feeling swept over him.

This was the first real city he had ever been in and it dazed and bewildered him. Ships from Athens and Rome and Tyre, and ports beyond his imaginings were here— the traffic of the world, speaking and shouting in a score of tongues. Every type of craft lay along the quay. Men black as night worked on them. The brown lateen sails of Arab dhows rose like the uplifted wings of gulls about to take flight. Strings of sneering camels, patient donkeys, and lumbering wooden-wheeled wagons carried the merchandise away in bustle and confusion.

Nobody had any time to spare for a country boy. He might have been invisible until he got in the way and then he was cursed in the names of unknown gods.

He was glad enough to escape from the bustle of the port and find himself in cool and gracious gardens, where flame trees threw up their red-gold fountains and the palms made graceful tracery against the blue. The paths were of crushed white coral, and along them strolled citizens of leisure who took their ease. These had time to notice the golden boy who passed along smiling and yet like one mazed in dreams. Gazelle eyes studied him with shy side-glances. Bold ladies, with much make-up and hair dyed golden—though not so golden as his — ogled him between lashes heavy with kohl. Haughty Romans and Greeks glanced at him, wondering in passing what young god had come to Alexandria. And even the men noted him as a good-looking youngster.

In Beersheba, Mark would have been in his element, but such people as these did not dwell there.

Now it chanced that among those who took the morning air in the cool shade was the

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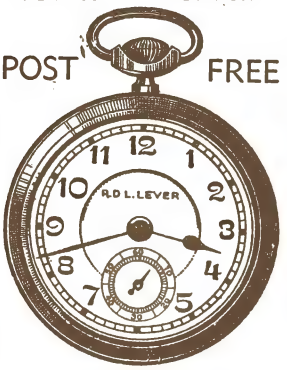

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Rabbi Isaac Ben Yehudah. He was a gentle-faced, bearded man of middle age, one of learning and wisdom whom his flock declared was a minor prophet. He walked with his hands clasped behind his back, and for once his brow was creased for he fretted about his daughter, Esther.

Something caused him to look up, and he saw the golden boy as a bright light, for he was very wise. He paused, and signed to the young man.

"Son," he said, "you are from the homeland and newcome here and strange. Do you need a friend in this metropolis?"

At these words Mark became himself again and he smiled happily and his eyes were grateful. All his unease and discomfiture vanished away and he was gay as a sunbeam.

"It is even so, sir," he said. "Could it be that I have found one?"

"It could be very well. Walk with me and tell me of yourself."

Though he had had much fun with the people of the galley, Mark felt that this was the first time he had spoken to someone who was real since he had left home. He told of the farm outside Beersheba, of old Michaelis and John and his mother who was dead; he explained how it came that he was there alone in Alexandria, and, surprisingly, homesick.

Ben Yehudah listened, nodding from time to time, and then he said, "I understand as your father did, but all this is still very bewildering to you. You need a breathing space so that you can find your feet in the wider world. If you so will, you may lodge a space at my house. You will be free to come and go, but you will have a base of security."

"Sir," said Mark, radiant, "you are too kind to a stranger."

The Rabbi considered.

"And yet," he said then with his habitual honesty, "not entirely without motive. I have a daughter at home, Esther, and she keeps the house and mourns. She loved a young man very much. They were out in a dahabeah on the Nile with a party. He dived in from the side, struck a sandbank and broke his neck. He lingered for twelve hours, quite conscious and talking with her, and then he died. She will see no one and only mourns. But a guest in our house she must see, and it comes to me that you are one to make her smile. I have seen much of sorrow. It passes, but it is well to help it pass. I know you can do that for me."

"I shall do my very best, sir," said Mark, and he vowed he would, though Esther prove to be as ill-favoured as any crone in all Egypt.

IV

SHE was not. Esther was lovely and palely sad as a flawless pearl. At first she was shy and withdrawn with him, but Mark, not betraying that he knew her story, was his natural happy self. He felt very at home in the cool and quiet house, and he loved the Rabbi who had befriended him.

The small place was built about a courtyard paved with blue tiles and musical with the cooing of doves and the splash of a tiny fountain. The three of them sat there in the evening cool, and Mark was telling of some of his boyhood pranks on the farm. The manner of the telling was perhaps better than the stories themselves. He laughed as he spoke and the Rabbi chuckled and suddenly Esther joined in like a tinkle of camel bells heard at dawn.

Ben Yehudah thanked his guest with a glance and from that time on the cloud began to drift away from the house.

It seemed to the Rabbi that it might well be the Lord had granted Mark another chance to save him from wanderings which would lead him nowhere though they took him all over the world.

It was not to be.

Mark had seen much of Alexandria — its bazaars and coffee shops, its wine bars and dancing girls—but he avoided the port although it drew him like a magnet. After a week he succumbed and walked the quays again, no longer dazed but restless and unquiet. Ships and people made a picture more colourful than a rainbow, more intoxicating than the strongest red wine. Looking at these boisterous, swaggering nomads of the seas — here to-day and gone to-morrow, always thrusting on towards a horizon which moved back, luring them further—it struck him that his present life was not so very unlike that on the farm, though it was so much easier and richer and more luxurious.

His gentle host and lovely young hostess, the very house itself, all conspired to hold him there, anchored, becalmed, whilst his boast had been that he would see all the wide world, even to the Pillars of Hercules.

A Greek captain, wearing great golden ear-rings and a

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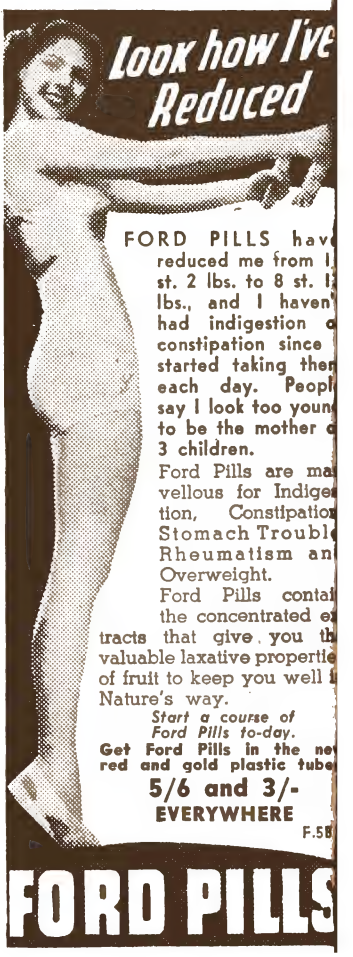

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red, close-fitting cap with a long tassel, leant over the rail of a rakish black craft with the swift lines of a gazelle. His hawklike face was thrust forward and his shrewd eyes probed at Mark, reading what was in his mind.

"Ho there, young sir, master," he called, "have you any money?"

"I have."

"Then why waste it all in one place? While you are still young enough to enjoy it you should travel fast and far. Come now, sir, master, we sail in two hours for Rome by way of Athens. Why not come with us—since you have the means—and see cities which will make this Egyptian dung-heap seem just that? What say you, master, sir?"

He spoke in the lingua franca by which all men who sailed the sea at the centre of the earth made themselves understood. Mark had picked it up easily. In that wheedling voice was the song of the sirens.

"I say," said Mark, "that I shall take passage with you and be back within the two hours."

Israel Ben Yehudah looked up from the scroll he was studying and a shadow passed over his face as Mark came gaily, lightly, into the little tiled courtyard.

"So you leave us, son?" said he, before Mark had time to speak. "You have repaid us well for the little we have done. Go in peace, Mark Ben Michaelis, for as your father had not the heart to seek to chain thee, neither have I."

V

THEY lay at the Piraeus, which is the port of Athens.

"We have not much cargo to discharge and but a little to load," said the master. "We sail at noon. That will give you four hours in which to see Greece — and not one moment more." He chuckled. "It is not much time, but it will whet your appetite, and you can return again at your leisure. How does your fine city of Alexandria look to you now?"

He gestured proudly .

"Not all I thought," Mark admitted.

He gazed in wonder at Athens, which rose upon its sloping hills like the city of a dream, remote and aloof from the commerce of the Piraeus. White villas were sprinkled among groves of olives and decorative trees, noble columned buildings which remained graceful and seemed light as the clouds rose here and there, and on the very crest against the blue, rose the grandeur and poetry of the Parthenon. Everywhere statues and the gleam of marble.

It took Mark's breath away.

Though not reverent as a general thing he stepped on to the earth of fabled Greece in awe. This was the kind of beauty that he had known awaited him beyond the sky.

He strode along climbing the first of the hills, and came into a tree-lined way of private homes, decorated with carvings in the stone, with statuary among the laurels and fountains raising feathery plumes in the sunshine.

He had not gone far along this road when a strange thing befell. A low-slung carriage passed him. It was drawn by two cream horses, and a Nubian slave, black as ink, drove it, with another of his countrymen seated beside him. Mark glimpsed a woman reclining on cushions, and then they had passed and he could only admire the carriage, which was plated with mother of pearl and embossed with lines of gold.

A hundred yards or so ahead the horses were reined in, and the carriage paused as if awaiting him. That, of course, was an absurd notion, but he lengthened his stride, for he had a desire to see more of its occupant.

When he came up with it the lady leaned forward a little, and slim, white finger raised signed to him to stop. Readily enough he did so, and his eyes feasted and he smiled for joy at the sight of such beauty. She wore a long robe of white silk, gathered in at the waist. Golden sandals were on her feet. He noticed these things first, though he was aware of her face all the time. And when he came to look fully at her he saw that she was more beautiful than any of the statues he had been admiring, yet unlike them was not cold marble but very warm flesh and blood. She was fair and her skin was like a rose; her nose was very straight and delicately chiselled; her eyes were the dangerous blue of the Mediterranean when a storm is coming up swiftly over the horizon.

Her eyes and her full lips smiled as she considered him.

He had an odd feeling that he had seen her before. But that was impossible. Suddenly it came to him. In the wine bar of Vino the Greek in Alexandria, safe in a niche and guarded by a grille, had stood a vase which he had much admired. It was deep blue with a frieze of figures

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in white, linking hands about it.

She had escaped from that treasure of Vino the Greek.

Suddenly she nodded, as if deciding something within herself, and spoke to him in Greek. He shook his head, and told her, in Hebrew, that he did not understand.

They looked at each other, baffled for the moment, and then both burst out laughing. When she laughed her classic beauty turned into the merriment of a little village girl playing in the dust by the roadside.

The golden boy found her even more enchanting then.

He explained to her in the lingua franca he had arrived only that morning from Alexandria. If she did not follow him entirely she appeared to catch his drift, for she nodded and smiled, and waved a white hand back in the direction of Egypt.

Mark went on to indicate his ship lying down at the quay, and pointed to the sun which climbed the sky, and then straight above his head and finally back to the ship again.

She understood that he would be sailing again at noon.

Her lips curled in mischief and her eyes sparkled.

She tapped the silken cushions beside her, inviting him to step in. Delighted and amazed, Mark did so. Never had the boy from the farm ridden in such ease and wonder. He ceased to look at the marvels of Athens. He gazed into those long, green eyes and forgot all else . . .

The sun climbed across the zenith, and the captain of the lean black ship fretted and fumed, for passengers as well as crew were expected to obey his orders. He was about to give the word to cast off the lines and put to sea, leaving his happy-go-lucky traveller to fend for himself, when he saw a fine carriage coming along the quay at a hand-gallop. The white horses were pulled back on their haunches and Mark sprang out. The gang plank had been drawn in, but that did not bother the golden boy. He leapt nimbly aboard and the midday sun was not brighter than his smile.

"Sorry, dear captain," he said, "but it was hard to tear oneself away from the beauty of Athens."

And he laughed aloud and danced a few merry steps, as a man will who has taken wine.

The captain shouted his orders mechanically, for his mind was on other things. He had recognised the carriage as that of Mercedes, known to all men as "the Aphrodite-of-a-thousand-whims." A bright star much desired but attained by few.

How did this boy come to return in her carriage? How much had he had to squander to gain that ride?

Since Mark volunteered no information it was above his dignity to ask, but the truth was that Athens was the one port in which the spendthrift golden boy had not parted with so much as a single penny.

VI

"HAIL to thee, Israelite. Welcome to Rome."

The words in his own tongue rang happily in Mark's ears. Rome, Imperial Rome, the Rome of Tiberius Cæsar, the greatest city that had ever been or ever would be, had surfeited him with wonders. He had tramped the crowded streets of its seven hills; he had visited pagan shrines set in deep groves and marvelled that such beauty should be raised to the glory of false gods; he had admired statuary and the marble arches which commemorated triumphs of arms; he had stood on bridges and watched the busy traffic of the Tiber; he had been dazzled by the kaleidoscopic crowds of all the races of mankind which flowed before his eyes.

But Mark was over-young and over-volatile to be satisfied with sightseeing. His affable nature craved the warmth of companionship; his restless spirit hungered for flesh and blood contacts, for adventure, for excitement.

Rome, however, was too mighty and the Romans too busy about their own affairs to pay any attention to still another visitor from the outlands, no matter how handsome and golden he might be.

Mark had discovered that he had quite a gift for languages, and just as he had picked up readily the lingua franca — and with its aid he had now picked up quite a useful smattering of Latin from talk at the inn and chance conversations here and there; but this had served no purpose.

To be addressed by somebody from home made his heart jump. The greeting had been spoken behind him, and he turned about eagerly.

Instead of one of his own race, a tall, richly-clad young Roman stood there. He had the easy arrogance of one of the rulers of the earth, and yet this was softened by his merry eyes and mouth. Here was no grave senator, but a cheerful, bubbling fellow and one after Mark's own heart.

"You are surprised to find that I am not Jacob or Isaac or some such, and I do not blame you," the Roman said. "Few here speak Hebrew. But I served four years with Cæsar's legions in Israel, and it is well to learn the language of the country." He winked and looked mischievous. "It helps for happier contacts with the locals. The life of a soldier can be lonely. I fared well in your land." His smile held happy reminiscence. "I made a vow at the shrine of Venus that if ever I had a chance to repay I should do so."

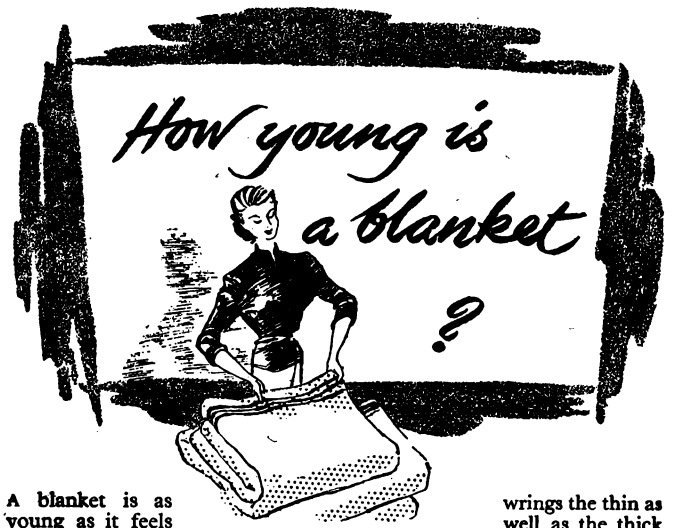
"Then I am fortunate, sir," said Mark.

"Petronius to you," said the Roman. "Petronius Claudius —at your service." He made a graceful but light-hearted bow.

Mark introduced himself, and explained how he came to be in Rome. His heart warmed to this affable, easy young stranger who was a stranger no longer.

The innkeeper had advised Mark not to miss the famous baths, and he had been standing rather nonplussed in the anteroom not knowing where to begin. They had nothing like this in Beersheba. Great marble halls stretched away in all directions, there was the musical sound of splashing water, and the regular patrons strolled about, laughing and gossiping, at home and at ease. It had been otherwise with Mark.

Now, however, all was well. He had a friend—a patrician, an aristocrat. The luck which had seemed to have deserted him had come back.



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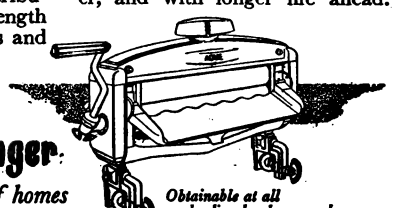

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With Petronius as guide, they passed through the complicated and refreshing ritual of the bath: sweltering in hot rooms and melting in rooms full of steam, walking under cascades of icy water, plunging into hot pools and cold. Negroes with magic in their fingers massaged them and thumped them and rubbed on salt and sluiced it off again.

They talked with growing intimacy, Petronius mentioning, with natural pride, that he was one of the fortunate six who were of the officers' bodyguard and closer to Cæsar personally than many who thought themselves mighty ones. At this Mark looked at him with renewed awe, and marvelled that he should condescend to be the friend of a humble traveller. But, of course, there was that vow to Venus.

When all was done, and they were cooling off, their skins like silk, their bodies full of well-being, Petronius said, "You are not like most Jews, Mark."

"In being fair?"

"Yes, that, and in being handsome. Most of the men of your race run to paunches and beards. I have an idea. Have you been to the stadium yet?"

Mark shook his head.

"Then let us rest here, and eat lightly and drink wine, and this afternoon we shall go to the circus. I believe a blond barbarian fights two lions with a small dagger, and a slave girl who tried to escape is to be tied naked to a savage bull which will be infuriated by flaming darts. There are other amusing items which I've forgotten. And then there'll be the chariot races on which we can wager. Are you lucky so?"

"Since I started my wanderings I have not fared well at dicing and the games of chance."

Petronius smiled.

"Then you played against men—cunning men," he said out of his greater knowledge of the world. "The horses may prove kinder to one come from a farm. I have a box right at the arena side. You will meet some others of the guard. They are good fellows, I warrant you."

"Nothing could be better than that," said Mark happily, and once again he saw how wise he had been to take his portion and break through the blank wall of the sky.

VII

NEVER had Mark seen such a concourse of people as crowded the many tiers of the white circle of the stadium. There was a constant hum and stir and movement, so that it was as if a myriad giant bees swarmed.

Petronius' box was, as he had said, right on the edge of the arena and quite close to the Imperial, which, to Mark's regret, remained untenanted, for to have seen Tiberius Cæsar, ruler of mankind, at such a range would have been a memory to cherish. The four young men who joined them proved to be almost as good company as Petronius. Much laughter and merriment and jesting in the bright sunshine.

When the events began, Mark, the simpleton, was shocked and his stomach was uneasy. They had not circuses like this in Israel. The barbarian from the north, whose hair and beard were so fair that they looked almost white, was a giant of a man. In desperation he contrived to slay the lion, only to be killed in turn by the beast's mate; the slave girl was finally dislodged by the great angry black bull and gored to death —and so it went on. The bottles of wine in their wicker cases were passed round, and Mark drank deeply. He felt the need of it. But the noble Romans saw no harm in the show, and watched with enjoyment, sometimes raising a shout of encouragement, sometimes applauding. Then a saying that was current everywhere came into his mind: When in Rome do as the Romans do.

Who was he to set himself up in judgment when these highly civilised mighty ones found only entertainment?

He drank more wine and conquered his qualms.

An interval preceded the chariot races, and small black boys sold cold drinks and sweetmeats. Petronius, who had been talking in undertones with the big fellow called Magnus, watching death and daring in the arena out of the corner of a blase eye, now drew Mark to the back of the box.

"Friend Mark," said he, "you still have plenty of money."

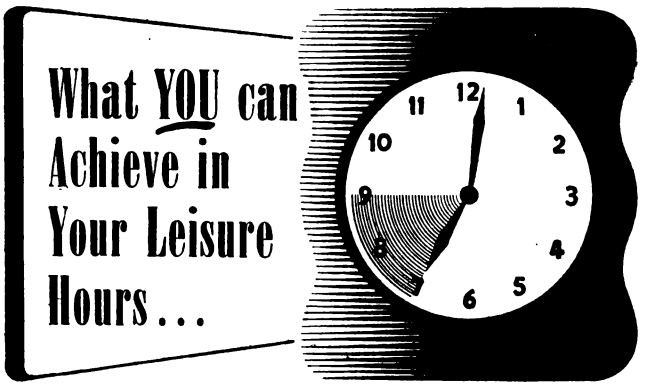
"Not as much as when I left home, but, yes, still plenty."

"What would it be worth to you when you returned to that home to say you had been host to Tiberius Cæsar at your own private party?"

Mark's mouth fell open in astonishment, and for a moment he found no words.

Then said he, "Friend Petronius, how could that be? You jest?"

"In truth, no. The divine Emperor wearies at times of



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the court and its pomp and the sycophants. Then it is his will to mix with mere plain mortals, like us young men of his guard. But it is an expensive business, I warn you.' '

"That is of no matter," said Mark, agog and thrilled.

"Good," said Petronius, "you are as I thought you to be from the first. Then this is the way of it: Antonio of Athens has a small banqueting hall which is reserved for hire by the elite. He serves meals fit for the gods — and Cæsar. It shall be yours to-night, but at a price, and a high price. The custom is to pay him in advance, for after a banquet at Antonio's no man is fit to tally the reckoning."

"It sounds a good system."

"It is. There is one other thing. When Cæsar attends a private party it is the custom for the host to present him with a bag containing one hundred pieces of gold."

Mark was too excited even to blink at this huge sum.

"It is known as 'Cæsar's Tribute,' and he distributes it later to the poor of the city. It is the custom. Do you agree?"

"In Rome I do as the Romans do," said Mark, who had drunk considerable wine and was also intoxicated by the prospect.

"So be it," said Petronius. "After the races we shall go straight to Antonio's, settle with him, and begin. It is Cæsar's wish that this should be done. Since he is not here to-day he is obviously engaged on affairs of state. When those are disposed of he will join us. The chariots are coming out. Do you wish to wager?"

"Yes."

"The team on the side there —the greys—will win. I know the owner. He is confident. How much do you wish to stake?"

Mark gave him five pieces of silver, and found himself alone in the box, but he was content to sit there, and think of the evening ahead. The others returned just as the race was about to start.

An official dropped a piece of red cloth, the drivers gave their champing horses rein, and the chariots flashed away. This was much more to Mark's taste than the events that had gone before. The crowd stood and shouted, and Mark was with them. The magnificent horses, straining every sinew, blowing and panting, nostrils extended, manes flying out, dashed past them, and started on a second round. The light chariots rocked and swayed, their wheels spinning so fast that they seemed to stand still. The drivers yelled and whooped, and flourished their long whips.

At that stage Mark's team ran last, but at the end of the second round they had drawn into second place, and the multitude were hailing them as winners. Sure enough, half-way round the last lap they drew ahead to win easily.

"I told you the horses might be kinder," said Petronius, equally delighted.

So this time Mark allowed him to bet the fifteen pieces and told him to put them on whatever he fancied.

But the luck did not hold, for the second race nor for any of the others, and Mark, seeking to make good his losses, only succeeded in piling them up. But what was a trifle like that to worry one who was to be host to Cæsar? And even when two chariots crashed together in a maelstrom of plunging horses and scrambling drivers there was no death in the arena as there had been earlier.

Mark did not mind paying for this fun.

VIII

ANTONIO'S banquet hall was small but perfect—a jewel casket. The walls were of black marble polished to such a lustre that they shone like mirrors. At intervals broad bands of softest silk fell in scarlet cascades from the blue of the ceiling, where golden stars were dotted, to the white marble floor. In an alcove stringed instruments played soft and silver notes which did not intrude on the talk. Barefooted slaves forestalled, as if by second sight, the smallest wish.

The six young men reclined at ease on their couches about the low table, drank the finest wines from glasses of purest crystal, and ate from silver plates delicacies gathered with expert skill and loving care from mountain and plain, from sea and sky and river and lake. From lark's tongue to pieces of baby squid in jelly; from specially fattened quail to sturgeon's roe; from oysters to day-old sucking pig —everything was there to delight and tempt the palate. Exotic fruits which Mark had never seen before were piled high in silver bowls.

Amazed as he was that he should be host at such a fabulous banquet, Mark did not eat so very much, for his eyes returned again and again to the vacant place at the other end of the table, and when it did so the glass in his hand trembled.

"Have no fear," said Petronius who was beside him. "When he wishes, he has the simplicity of the great."

"That I believe," said Mark.

A brass gong was struck outside, and its solemn, golden sound quivered in the air, silencing the strings and bringing the party to their feet.

Antonio backed in, bowing low repeatedly. For one so fat he performed this feat with surprising ease. Next two soldiers with squat, broad swords appeared, and they were followed by the wearer of the Imperial purple. Two African slaves, armed with spears, brought up the rear, but they were mere unnoticed shadows.

"Hail, Cæsar!" the company said, raising arms in salute.

Petronius had drilled Mark carefully, and this was as well for he joined in the salute automatically. But his eyes goggled and his mind was numbed as he realised that the ruler of the world stood there before him, his guest.

Tiberius Cæsar was a heavy, stocky man. Had he been another, one might have said he was gross and fat. Not so of Cæsar, for greatness and power and authority were stamped on him as surely as his features were stamped on the coin of the realm. His nose was curved like an eagle's beak, his mouth straight ruled, his chin strong.

Leaning on the arm of a slave he lowered himself into his place without any loss of dignity, and gave a small sigh of relief, like one weary of the affairs of state and glad enough to relax in the easy company of these adoring youngsters.

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With a wave of his hand he invited them to resume their places. Magnus hastened to fill the Emperor's glass, which the Emperor passed to the slave who handed it on to Antonio. The proprietor took a little sip and wiped the rim with a napkin. He did not fall to the floor in the throes of poisoning but allowed himself a discreet little smack of the lips at the perfection of this vintage.

Cæsar, having drained the glass at one draught—it was promptly filled again — began picking with zest at the delicacies set before him, and asked who was his host that night.

Petronius Claudius told of the young man who had come to Rome from one of Cæsar's furtherest-flung dominions especially to see his ruler; he told of the chance meeting, and how impressed he had been by the stranger's enthusiasm, which had led them all to offer him the honour of being host to Cæsar.

Mark's smattering of Latin enabled him to follow much of this, and he blushed beneath the dark tan which the years on the farm and his voyagings had given him.

The black, seeing, compelling eyes of Tiberius, looking at his host, softened and warmed and a smile changed his stern expression to benign kindliness.

Mark knew what to do. He rose, came to attention, and bowed low to the Emperor. Then he took the bag of gold from beside him and he passed round the table. When he reached Cæsar he went on one knee and balanced the bag on the other. Cæsar laid his hand on it in acceptance, and a slave took it away.

Though he still smiled and his eyes remained gentle, seen thus close to, the Emperor seemed a sad man to Mark, and it struck him in that instant that perhaps the great of the earth must always be less happy than those humble ones who have only their own lives to lead.

Mark was about to rise when Cæsar took off a heavy gold ring set with a gigantic ruby. He put out his hand and claimed Mark's, slipping the ring on the third finger. Mark had not been warned that this might happen, and knew not what to do, but on the spur of the moment he took Cæsar's hand and kissed it. Then, somehow or other, he found his way back to his place. They raised their glasses to him and laughed and cheered.

Presently Tiberius asked him, through Petronius, how Rome was viewed in Israel. Forewarned that he might do so, Mark had the proper and tactful answers ready, and, indeed, this was not difficult, for his people had suffered under many worse masters, and the Roman law, though stern and uncompromising, was administered, in the main, with justice. But even as Petronius translated his replies, Mark felt that Cæsar knew a great deal more about that corner of his empire than he himself did, though once it had been all his world.

Then they sang marching songs — soldiers' songs — Tiberius, forgetting the cares of office, beating time with a turkey bone.

More wine — much more wine — more singing, more stories, and the next thing Mark knew he was no longer reclining on the swansdown padded divan at Antonio's but was lying on his hard and narrow couch in the little sailors' tavern down by the Tiber. His head throbbed, his eyes burned, and his stomach felt as if he had swallowed a ball of fire. The late afternoon sun streamed in.

For a space he lay there gathering his wits together, and gradually the amazing events of yesterday came back to him. But had they really happened? Had he dreamed them? Had he been ill and were they the imaginings of fever?

The ring — Cæsar's ring— that would prove it one way or the other.

He looked at his hand.

There was no ring.

And yet—and yet—the more he thought of it the more real the fantastic adventure became.

But no ring . . .

The curtain over the low arch of the entrance was drawn aside, and the innkeeper came in, bearing a pottery drinking vessel. He was from the isle of Malta — a sallow little man with sleek black hair and the quick eyes of a squirrel.

"So, so, you are awake at last?" he said in the sailors' tongue. "Drink this and tell me all that happened."

The drink he handed Mark was brewed from herbs after a recipe long known at Malta. It was bitter and stinging, but a true elixir, for it cleared his head and his eyes and put out the fire.

The innkeeper squatted on his heels and waited. Mark was glad enough to have a listener and he told the whole story. The innkeeper nodded and nodded but did not interrupt.

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"Did I dream it all?—for even the Emperor's ring has vanished."

"You did not dream it," said the Maltese. "They brought you back here when the sun was well up in the eastern sky. You were very, very drunk. I put you to bed."

"Was I wearing the ring?"

"No, they had taken that to use on another occasion. In any case it was only brass and glass." When Mark exclaimed in protest, the other said, "I have much work to do. Let me explain, briefly and bluntly. As you saw at the stadium, the Romans, for all their civilisation, have a cruel sense of humour and fun. This is ever so with conquerors. They laughed, as you noticed with dismay, when the slave girl fell from the bull and was gored to death.

"I should have warned you against these young men, but how was I to know that they would pick you up? They are officers in Cæsar's army—yes! —but so junior that he does not know of their existence. They like high living and fun, the best of food and wine, but their pay won't run to such things. They are a merry crowd of merry fellows—according to their Roman lights —and clever and ingenious. The talk runs that they have played the same trick on a dozen simpletons passing through Rome. Your Tiberius was an old actor who bears a remarkable resemblance to the Emperor and is well versed in the part by now. He probably gets a tenth of the 'tribute' and a banquet into the bargain. That is one of their arguments: that everybody has a lot of fun and no harm done. The true Cæsar, as all Rome knows save you, makes holiday over on Capri. Oh, by the way, your friend Petronius probably betted with your money all the afternoon and won much. They are well versed in the chariot racing, which — despite the shouting and the frenzy—is far from honest. Your friend would know which had been chosen to win. So there it is, young man. Rome is a wicked city."

Through this devastating revelation of how he had been hoaxed, Mark's mobile face had expressed many things—bewilderment, dismay, chagrin, shame, anger—but all at once he saw the funny side of it and burst into a shout of laughter.

The innkeeper nodded approval.

"That is the way to take it," he said.

When Mark could speak again, he said, "They certainly were too smart for this farmer's boy. And yet in a way they gave me value. If I live to five score years and ten I shall never again give such a party. The rogues and rascals—but somehow I can't hate them. All the same, I have said I would journey to the end of the world, and I think I have had all the fun I need in Rome. It is too tough for me. I shall be on my way."

IX

THE Arab dhow sailed fast on the slightest breath of breeze and even stole along when it seemed to be a flat calm. It was as if the white-hooded skipper possessed a magic gift.

They followed the African coast, calling at small seaports which nestled between the yellow desert and the blue waters, their box-like mud houses so close together that there was barely room for the swaying elephants and the laden camels to pass. Mark was fascinated by the swarms of people come out of the unknown lands which lay to the south — their skins ranging through all shades from ebony to gold. And in each port some money ran away, what with watching the Arab dancing girls and tasting the rough wine and eating strange dishes and a little gambling now and then in open cafes heavy with the breath of incense.

A sunset hour brought Mark at long last to world's end, to journey's end, for he could go no further. And there were the Pillars of Hercules he had told his father he would see: on the African shore a great, steep, towering mountain, and on the other hand a vast shape of rock like a crouching lion. Down a narrow strait between ran the waters of the Mediterranean. Mark looked into the sky of rose and purple and wondered greatly.

"What think you becomes of this water when it reaches the uttermost rim of the world?" he asked the captain. "Does it fall as rain and form into clouds to return to us and bring us rain?"

The Arab shrugged. "The wise men do not know these things. Who am I to answer, then, that am only the master of a dhow? There are those who have travelled far beyond the Pillars and have found certain lands, but even they have not come to the edge of the world. Still, it is out there somewhere."

Despite this news that there were lands beyond, Mark was content. So far as he was concerned he had come to world's end.

They had been living and sleeping on deck, but there was a small room in the stern where their belongings were stowed. In preparation for going ashore—for the dhow was only to pause an hour or so — Mark went there and found the hamper in which he carried his possessions. It had been made for him by the tailor in Beersheba who had sewn into its lining various cunning secret pockets. All these pockets were empty now, save only the bottom one which held the last of his wealth and had been kept in reserve for the journey home.

His exalted mood was quenched abruptly when he found that this last pocket had already been opened.

From a banker's diary ***No. 2***

Monday: Mr. and Mrs. [redacted] called.

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either by himself when in wine or haste, or by a thief. There remained in a corner only one piece of gold and five pieces of silver, and he was at the Pillars with the length of the earth between him and home.

He searched anxiously in the other pockets, but nothing else remained of the portion his father had given him.

So Mark, kneeling on the floor of the little hot box of a place, swore at himself for that he was a foolhardy spendthrift.

Then he did up his hamper, put the coins in his pouch and and went on deck. The night was falling, and the dhow was drawing into a small fishing village which nestled at the foot of the towering rock. The captain pointed out the narrow neck of land which joined the rock to the mainland in Iberia, and since he had a liking for the golden boy, pressed him to stay and eat a last meal as his guest though the passage for which he had paid terminated when the dhow was made fast. Mark was very glad to accept. No more for him banquets at Antonio's.

"No pal, I don't know a thing about it. My brother's ill and I'm just taking his place for the day."

The simple meal on deck eaten, and the last cup of coffee drunk, Mark said his farewells and went ashore, swinging his bundle, which held nothing now save clothes. Wandering aimlessly along the narrow streets with the loom of the rock above against the bright stars, he was sore perplexed.

Presently he came to a cafe which was in a big cave in the rock. It was lit with smoky scarlet by torches set into rings in the blackened walls, and at a table in the middle a group of men sat dicing, with wine and piles of money at their elbows.

Mark paused and considered. The little he had was of no real use. Could he but quadruple it and more—that would be another story. Fortune had been kind to him in that she had allowed him to see the world and had brought him that night to his heart's desire. True, she had not smiled on him when he gambled, but at a time like this she surely would relent.

He went into the fiery cave, and was made welcome, for his money was as good as another's. The proprietor brought him a glass of wine without charge, and they made room for him. The players were sailors and fishermen and handsome, black-eyed fellows whom he guessed had come across that strip of land from Iberia.

The game they played was new to him but after watching a round or so he had the manner of it, and wagered modestly. And won. And won again. And again. Confidence grew, and he doubled his stake.

Even so it was not enough. He played on, winning, losing, winning, losing. And gradually the little hillock of coins melted away, until he was left with only the gold piece.

He staked this all on a single throw, and the dice served him ill.

He rose and took up his hamper, and they bade the stranger courteous good nights and wished him better fortune another time. And, indeed, they had cause to be polite, for his visit had profited them well.

Mark went slowly back to the quay and the dhow had sailed. He found a shed where cargo was stored. It was empty and open. Using his hamper as a pillow he presently fell asleep to dream that he was home again on the farm, and this was a good dream and one from which he had no wish to awaken.

By now Mark was well versed in the ways of the sea, and Fortune smiled on him again, since there was no gambling involved, for lying close by was a ship bound for Tyre which would take him far on his road home. The captain liked the look of the strong, smiling young man and since he was prepared to work his passage without payment he took him on as a member of the crew.

So Mark rejoiced in his heart for he had done all he had set out to do and now he would return to his father and show his gratitude, acting as a sober and grown man who had sown his wild oats.

X

IT was high summer and the day had been trying and hot on the farm beyond Beersheba. John trudged wearily home from the furthest field, his hoe on his shoulder. Though he would never know any other, a farmer's life was arduous, with no end to the work to be done through the four seasons which came round and round like a turning water wheel.

Now as he drew nigh the house he saw that something was afoot, for there were great comings and goings, and green branches had been placed to form festive arches above the doors and windows. Then came, hurrying as fast as his old legs would carry

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him, Matthew, the overseer, and others, and they were all excitement.

—"Young master, we bring thee great news," said Matthew, so thrilled that he was quite out of breath. "Your brother has returned, and there is much rejoicing."

"This is good," said John, and he made it sound convincing. "This is very good. And has he had a good time in all these months and is he well?"

He spoke these things, but as he wiped the sweat from his dusty brow he could not conquer sharp pangs of envy when he thought of Mark roaming as he willed, a gentleman of leisure living elegantly whilst he, from many dawns to many dusks, had borne the heat and labour of the days. It had irked him often since Mark went away, and now that he had come back the injustice of it swept over him in a thunder cloud.

The servants told him eagerly of how Mark had been shipwrecked far up the coast beyond Tyre, and, being penniless, had worked on a farm where they treated him so ill that he ate the pigs' food ere he emptied it into the troughs. Then he had set out to walk to his home, begging his way and doing odd jobs for a night's shelter in the barn and a crust of bread. He had come in rags, barefooted, with blistered feet, but his father had rushed to make the wanderer welcome, and had given him the finest new garments and a ring of gold.

"And," old Matthew concluded gleefully, "the fatted calf has been slain and the neighbours are invited to the feast."

These last words brought to the surface of John's mind and soul another emotion which had been there all the time though he had striven not to acknowledge it. This was stronger than his envy; it was fear. Ruth would be at the rejoicings. Whilst Mark was away, in his slow, quiet fashion John had wooed Ruth and loved her dearly. He knew she returned that love, and it had seemed that any day they might be betrothed. But now that his golden brother — wide-travelled, a swaggering man of the world who had seen all things—had returned, what might become of his dream?

Even before he went away Mark had been fascinating and handsome and had won all hearts. He would be even more so now.

Mechanically he thanked the servants and sent them about their duties. Then he started chipping at the dry earth with his hoe, for he was loath to go into the house.

Old Michaelis came hurrying out, all smiles, ten years younger than he had been that morn.

"Is not this the happiest day in all our lives?" he asked joyfully. "He has come back to us—Mary's son is with us again."

"It is grand news, father," said John, but though he tried his best he was not good at deceit, and he could not give the words the warmth that was called for.

Now old Michaelis had always understood John — who was himself over again—even though Mark had often puzzled him. He looked into John's wet, toil-stained face and he read what his faithful and dutiful son was feeling, and being just and honest he saw that he had grounds.

So he led him away to a rough stone seat under a fig tree, and they sat there, the father's arm soothingly about John's shoulder, and he reasoned gently with him, explaining how much he was loved and how deeply his care for and interest in the farm was appreciated, but pointing out, presently, that the return of the prodigal had restored to them a son and a brother who had seemed lost for ever. It was, said he, as if Mark had been dead and had risen from the grave. It was fitting that he should be made welcome and that they should be gay and celebrate.

His father's words—spoken softly to the sigh of the evening breeze in the fig tree—fell like cool waters on John's soul and put out the envy and jealousy which had dwelt there though they could not quench the secret fear.

"He will have bathed and dressed by now," said old Michaelis. "Come now, my beloved John, and meet your brother again."

And as they passed through the door into the living-room Mark entered from the rear of the house, wearing the fine garment and the golden ring. He looked older, there were new lines in his face, but he seemed more balanced and steadier. The strain of his long journey still showed, though the resilience of youth and his high spirits and health would soon erase that.

They hurried to each other, both hands extended, and each kissed the other on either cheek. Then Mark stood back and smiled fondly at his brother, and big tears of joy ran down his cheeks.

"Ah," said he, "it is good to be home again. There are many, many people in the world, John, but none to touch one's own. Certainly no man better than you, old faithful one, dear big brother."

"It is good to have you back, so good, Mark," said John, stirred to unwonted eloquence. "It is as if the sun had been long behind the clouds and had come out again to shine on this our house."

Old Michaelis was beaming.

"These words are very well said," he approved, rubbing his hands. "We have all the time there is to talk hereafter. Now John, you must go and bathe and change, for

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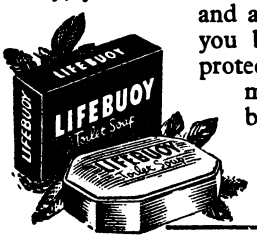

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soon the guests arrive and you would not have Ruth see you in your dirt."

"Ah, little Ruth," said Mark, remembering.

And John was glad enough to hurry away, for all his fear had surged up again. He hurried through his bath and changing, too. He had to see what happened when they met, those two. And he was just in time. The others had stepped out to greet Ruth and her father — little Ruth so loved, so lovely, all her dimples playing.

John paused and watched, his eyes sharper than they had ever been, heart in mouth. A sigh of relief rose from the depths of his being.

They had embraced, but only as two playmates of long ago, only as good friends. There was nothing of love, nothing of passion. Had there been he would have seen it, or sensed it immediately. The fear passed from him, as the jealousy and envy had. Having said words of welcome she ran — light as a feather — to John and claimed his hand.

"Did you not fear for us, now that your beautiful brother has come home?"

"I did," he admitted truthfully. "But I fear no more."

"You are wise, John, my John," she said. "For I am thine as you are mine, and that is the way it will ever be."

She drew him down quickly and kissed him on the mouth, and for John the sky seemed full all at once of the singing of nightingales.

The meal was a merry one, and the veal melted in the mouth. Mark told something of his travels, and even of his experience in Rome, though he censored some of the details. Old Michaelis had to appear somewhat shocked, but he couldn't help chuckling in his beard, and he was quite appeased when Mark held up his hand at the end and said, "I value this ring of my father's above all the real rings of the real Cæsar Tiberius, and above all his jewels."

John and Ruth sat opposite Mark — he so big and quiet, she gay as a sunbeam, just as Mark remembered his father and mother in the old days. He saw how it lay between them, and was mightily pleased. But behind his mask of levity his mind was concerned with a serious matter.

So much so that when the party was over and the guests had gone—John was not too tired now after the long day in the fields to see Ruth and her father home, and indeed, he had important business to discuss with their neighbour —Mark asked his father to sit for a while beneath the fig tree, and old Michaelis was glad enough to prolong such a memorable occasion.

The night was very quiet and lit only by the great stars. No glimmer of the brightness that bathes the cities of men. They sat a while in happy silence.

But when Mark broke it the peace was shattered.

"Father," he said, "I would ask one last favour of you."

"Ask, son."

"It is that you should give me money to go on a voyage."

Even to patient old Michaelis, and even in that hour, this was too much.

"Boy, boy," he exclaimed in a harsher tone than Mark had ever heard him use before, "what madness is this? But a few hours since you were abasing yourself and offering to be my bond-slave. Boy, boy, you cast me down with such folly." He curled the end of his beard furiously round his finger.

"In truth, father," said Mark, "I do not wonder that you are upset. But this is the way of it: On my travels I chanced on a treasure, and in my blind folly and restlessness I went on and left it behind."

"A treasure? And you left it behind? Where is this treasure?"

"In Alexandria. A mere step away to one who has travelled as I have. I shall return soon, and whether it fares ill or well with me—though my heart says it will fare well—I shall remain on the farm until they carry my body to the place of the dead."

He spoke so gravely that his father was impressed.

"And where is this treasure hidden, son?"

"In the house of Rabbi Isaac Ben Yehudah."

"It should be safe there."

Then Mark ceased to talk in riddles and explained.

"A rabbi's daughter, eh? So! So!" nodded old Michaelis, impressed. "But would she be happy here after the great city?"

"She would be happy anywhere," said Mark confidently. "She is as serene as this night, as beautiful as the evening star. I loved her from our first meeting in the little tiled courtyard, but I would not heed my heart lest love should shackle me just when I had gained my freedom. I would leave at dawn, father."

"The dawn is a good time to start on such an errand," said old Michaelis happily. "A new day begins." ●

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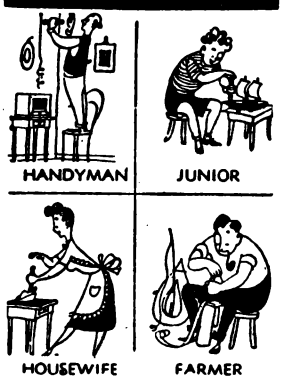

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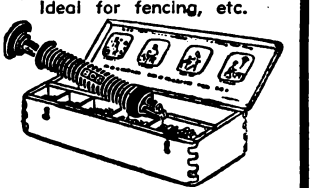

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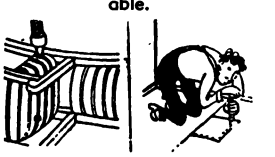

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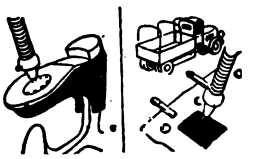

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in the ghost-hut had spoken to him.

R'Tanu's voice had been indistinct, hollow and booming, a very holy and devilish sound such as a proper ju-ju would doubtless employ. L'Beni thought of those two kicks and shivered in the water.

"O man of my service," came the terrifying voice again, "come out of the water lest in very truth I make of you a fish."

L'Beni did as he was bidden and flung himself flat upon his face before the opening into the hut.

"Lord ju-ju," he gasped, "look with kindness upon your servant for I am filled with fear so that my belly feels as if little ants rushed hither and thither within."

"Serve me according to my word, O man," replied the hollow booming voice, "and you may banish fear. But if you do that which I have not ordered you shall wake one morning with your hands placed where are your feet. As for your feet you shall discover them upon a certain place and this will be most tiring and difficult."

"Lord ju-ju," croaked L'Beni, "I am the dog of your dog."

WHEN L'Beni returned to his village, the villagers were not impressed with what he had to tell them for he had so often told the same tale and they grumbled when he insisted that, though the morrow was a fishing day, they were to come to the ghost-hut in the water to hear for themselves what R'Tanu had to say. They grumbled but they went, for L'Beni was a great raiser of boils if he was angered.

Before sunrise there was an expectant fleet of some forty canoes bobbing gently about the ghost-hut in the water. As the sun came up, L'Beni prostrated himself before the doorway and said, "Lord ju-ju, your children are here as you commanded."

The next moment the canoes had scattered in all directions, their occupants paddling frantically to escape beyond the range of that awful voice and it was with difficulty that L'Beni persuaded them to return lest they undergo the displeasure of R'Tanu. They learned, among other things, that the offerings which they brought to the ghost-hut were all wrong. Chickens, for instance, were not to be sacrificed on the island but butchered with due ceremony at the village and there cooked in a certain manner. When they had been so cooked they were to be brought to the ghost-hut, wrapped in clean leaves and left. Also, gourds of beer were to be brought. Under threat of the most terrible consequences the villagers were forbidden to come near the lagoon between sunset and sunrise and L'Beni learned, with some mortification, that he was included in this ban.

"For, behold," boomed the ju-ju in the hut, "during the hours of night I walk with my terrible feet upon these waters and any man who stands before my one eye will be pierced by my glance and go down to hell."

That R'Tanu spoke nothing but the truth was fully proved when Olami, who was a scoffer and a drinker of strong waters, was found one morning in his canoe on the lagoon and he was dead. The wound in the centre of his forehead where the ju-ju's glance had rested on him was unlike any wound his fellow villagers had ever seen before, it being neat and round like an eye and the flesh about it had been slightly scorched by the terrible heat of R'Tanu's bright glance.

The fame of R'Tanu went up and down the land and within a week the chief of the N'Gombi himself came to witness the phenomenon. He went away impressed and uneasy, for the celestial philosophy of this hitherto obscure ju-ju was upsetting. Others came, foreigners, some of whom had travelled as far as from the Northern Akasava, but when Bosambo of the Ochori came the ju-ju was silent and he went away apparently convinced that the stories had been found in the forest, as the saying has it.

At the Residency Sanders heard the rumours and said to Hamilton: "We'll have to look into this. There seems to be more than an element of truth in it. I suspect a crude form of ventriloquism practised by the witch-doctor. Also, a talking ju-ju I could put up with, at a pinch, provided he doesn't talk sedition, but a ju-ju whose bright eye kills by night is not a deity of which I approve. Bones is going up-country in a couple of days on that woman-chopping palaver in the Isisi and I'll get him to look in on the ju-ju in the water."

COUNT RUDOLPH VON SLEIN peered out of the ghost-hut and watched the deputation from the Akasava disappearing down the lagoon. He put down the big gourd into the mouth of which he had been speaking so that his voice was flung back hollow and booming. When the last canoe had disappeared out of sight he seated himself comfortably on R'Tanu's lap and lit one of his dwindling store of cigarettes.

Stooping his head to catch the last faint glimmer of the dying day he examined his notebook in which he had kept a careful tally of the passing days. He had known before looking at his home-made calendar that to-night he could expect to rendezvous with Harun ibn Malik and his secret caravan of mules and porters.

As he drew upon the luxury of the one cigarette he permitted himself a day, his thoughts spiralled upwards like the smoke and turned to the great dream which sustained him. For the man who achieved what he intended there would be rewards, great rewards. He saw himself returning to the Fatherland, the past wiped clean, to honours and recognition and, perhaps, the Iron Cross from the hands of the Kaiser, himself.

He knew that he would have only a short time in which to act, for the Englishman, Sanders, he knew to be singularly efficient and the story of the talking ju-ju would reach his ears sooner or later. Also, the shooting of that drunken fisherman with his silenced Luger might prove to have been a mistake. Still, it had clinched his ghostly powers in the minds not only of the N'Gombi but of the other peoples as well.

His musings were suddenly cut short and he hastily stubbed his cigarette out on R'Tanu's wooden stomach as he heard the lap-lap-lap of an approaching canoe. And then he dodged into the darkest corner of the hut as a broad beam of light was suddenly directed upon the landing-place of the tiny island. An electric torch! That meant a white man! Von Slein's mouth went dry, not with fear for himself, but with terrible anxiety that he had left his scheme too long.

Mr. Francis Augustus Tibbetts had left the "Wiggle" downstream and had come alone by canoe after dark to see for himself for, as he had said to Sanders, "I'll bet there's some jolly old jiggery-well-known-pokery."

THE following morning at sunrise the waters of the lagoon were black with canoes. There were the high-prowed N'Gombi dug-outs and the broader Akasava canoes which sit lower in the water. The Isisi were there, their craft painted orange as a sign of their intent. There were parties from nearly all the peoples of the river save the Ochori and, as the sun came up, the ju-ju in the water made his first and last prophecy and gave his devilish word that he would support their enterprise.

"Behold, when the moon is risen after this day you shall go to the land which lies upon the left bank of the Creek of Crocodiles. You shall not go until the moon has risen for until then there will be many devils there. And when you come to the land above the Creek of Crocodiles you will find a white lord whom you shall call Lotembu and with him will be an Arabi and before the place where they shall be sitting shall be many guns such as the soldiers of Sandi carry and also the fat guns which sit on legs and which laugh ha-ha-ha so that men die. And, behold, when you have these terrible things in your hands you will be as great as Sandi and his soldiers and you will know that you may drive him from the land and restore those splendid laws which were before the coming of Sandi in the days of your-father-his-father. And that you may know that I am strong for you and that I will lead and guide you, you shall have a sign, for, with the white lord and the Arabi will be Tibbetti, the son of Sandi, and he shall be as a prisoner. Go now and gather at the coming of the moon."

WITH a livid bruise on his forehead where von Slein had hit him with the butt of his heavy automatic, Bones sat white-faced in the camp-chair provided for him. Though his hands were free, his elbows were lashed securely to the back of the chair and his ankles to its legs. In other chairs sat von Slein and a sly-looking Arab who answered to the name of Ibn Malik.

"I apologise for inconveniencing you, Mr. Tibbetts," said the German smoothly, "but you are a sportsman, doubtless, and will know how to lose like a gentleman. I was taught the English sportsmanship at Eton."

Bones grinned nastily. "In that case, dear old Hun," he said, "you'd better start teaching this coffee-coloured gentleman your old school song. You'll jolly well feel like singing it when the Commissioner catches up with you."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, Mr. Tibbetts."

"The jolly old Boatin' Song. 'For we'll all swing together' . . ."

Count Rudolph flushed darkly but then he shrugged and said, "Oh, by the way, Mr. Tibbetts, I meant to tell you that I had captured your little steamer with the quaint name. She'll come in very handy when we start military operations."

"You realise, of course," said Bones quietly, "that none of these people whom you are going to arm with rifles will know the barrel from the butt"

Von Slein smiled. "That won't matter. It is the mere possession of weapons equivalent to those opposed to them that counts. Besides, I can use a machine-gun as also that very efficient little Hotchkiss of yours on your launch. I think I may promise Mr. Sanders a warm reception when he comes and once he is disposed of, I'll raze the Territories from the mountains to the sea. By the time I'm finished with this little part of the world, your government is going to have quite a respectable sized war on its hands."

"You may be right," said Bones wearily. Quite apart from the painful throbbing of his head, he felt sick at heart for, though men might fight in armies elsewhere, he knew that Sanders loved his people and had kept war from the Territories for their sake. "Where did you get all this stuff from?" he asked, nodding towards the stacked rifles, machine-guns and other weapons.

"It's the equipment for a full battalion of askaris," von Slein told him. "When our resistance in the Cameroons collapsed I buried it. I sent the Shaik here down to fetch it. Of course," he went on in a quietly conversational tone, "this little business will make a frightful mess of the Territories and we shall have to be very firm indeed to restore order when we take them over."

"Pardon me, dear old Hun, but who's this 'we' you refer to?"

Von Slein looked genuinely surprised. "Why, Germany, of course," he said.

"But, forgive my mentioning it, jolly old optimist, you haven't won yet."

Count Rudolph smiled and regarded Bones amusedly. "Don't be too ridiculous, Mr. Tibbetts," he admonished. "We are very thorough in Germany and we have prepared for this war for a very long time."

"But not for the war that you planned for my Territories," said Mr. Commissioner Sanders, stepping out from among the trees at their back.

"*Der teufel!*" snarled von Slein and swung round, dragging his big automatic from its holster.

But the long barrel was still pointing at the ground when Sanders shot him three times through the heart.

"Jolly old Excellency," giggled Bones and burst into tears.

As for Harun ibn Malik, he had noted the accuracy of the Commissioner's shooting and he sat very still. When Sanders turned a cold face towards him the Arab smiled and shrugged.

"*Kismet!*" he said.

Sanders blew a whistle and suddenly the place was alive with businesslike Houssas and lean Ochori spearmen.

"But how did you know, dear old sir?" asked Bones later, "and how could you have got here and turned up like jolly old Johnnie-on-the spot?"

Sanders told him. It had been an error in psychology for the ju-ju in the water to have remained silent only when the chief of the Ochori came to hear him speak. For Bosambo was suspicious—and wise. He called the captain of one of his fighting regiments to him, a man whom he could trust, and he dressed his hair with red clay after the manner of an Isisi hunter. This man he sent into the N'Gombi to hear the ju-ju speak. When he returned and reported to his chief, Bosambo realised that R'Tanu was preaching sedition and he flew a pigeon to headquarters, whose message brought Sanders aboard the "Zaire" with every man he could lay his hands upon, even though it was then only two in the morning.

When the various petty chiefs and headmen came at the rising of the moon, they found that the ju-ju in the water had spoken untruthfully for Sandi sat where the strange white lord was to have been and his face was unkind.

"Go back to your villages, O foolish people, who are as foolish as the *n'kema-n'kema* and I will come in time to your villages and you will be sorry."

"Lord Sandi," said one of the headmen frankly, "we are sorry now."

"Yet you will be sorrier," promised the Commissioner. He turned to the Arab who stood quietly between two Houssas. "As for you, Ibn Malik, you I shall hang, for this white lord did as he did as a soldier fighting for his own land, but you have done that which is beyond excuse, for profit."

"Sandi," said the Arab without a tremor, "if it is written that I shall hang, hang I shall."

"It is written," nodded Sanders and, as they turned away after the unpleasant business, the Commissioner heard Bones whistling a tune under his breath which he couldn't immediately place. It was only later, aboard the "Zaire" that night, that he found himself humming it and realised that it was the Eton Boating Song. ●

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THE YOUNG PRETENDER

WITH a sudden movement she wrenched herself free from the Duke and, retreating from him, stood behind a wing-backed chair.

"Listen to me," she said. "You have got to listen—but if you touch me again I—cannot tell you—for I love you—love you with all my heart and soul—but it is because I love you so—so deeply that I cannot do—what you ask."

Her voice faltered for a moment and then she went on, "Your Grace has a great position, you have a name respected and honoured throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. People look up to you and honour you—as indeed I do. And because of such things, and—because you are who you are—I can never be your wife."

"And why not?"

For one despairing moment Iona wished she might die before she need answer the question she had most dreaded to hear from his lips.

THEN, not looking at him, her lashes veiling her eyes as they stared unseeingly at her hands gripping the back of the chair, she stammered, "I have no name—I have never had one—I was brought up by my guardian, Major James Drummond.

"When I was old enough to understand, he told me that he could never reveal to me—the name of my parents. All that he could tell me was—that I was of Scottish blood and that—I had been christened Iona."

Iona's voice broke completely and then wildly she cried out through her tears, "Now go—and go—quickly."

Her hands went up to her eyes. She stood there trembling all over, fighting against the tempest of her tears which threatened to overwhelm her.

Even as she strove for self-control, she listened for the sound of the Duke's footsteps retreating, the sound of the door closing as he went out of her life.

Then suddenly she heard him make a movement and almost despite herself she looked from between her fingers.

She had a glimpse of his face almost transfigured by the tenderness of his expression as he went down on one knee beside her, and raising the hem of her dusty, creased gown, kissed it reverently.

For a moment he knelt there; then he rose to his feet and drawing her hands from her face, held them tightly in both of his.

"My dear, foolish little love," he said very softly. "Have you forgotten that you are already my wife?"

Iona's fingers quivered in his, but he would not release them.

"But that—that was not—binding," she said. "It was just an expedient—to allow me to escape—from the hands of the English."

"Expedient or not," the Duke replied firmly, "according to the law of Scotland—your law and mine, my darling—we are married."

"But—but—" Iona faltered.

"There is no but," the Duke said masterfully. "You are mine and nothing that you can say or do will ever persuade me to let you go."

Now it was impossible for Iona to hide the happiness which enveloped her and left her speechless, lighting her eyes until they shone like stars, parting her lips through which her breath came quickly.

The Duke drew her towards him; once again she was in his arms; and this time his mouth sought hers and found her lips.

IONA felt him take possession of her, felt a wonder and a magic sweep over her in utter and complete surrender of herself. She clung to him.

For a moment the world was lost and forgotten and she was carried into a heaven of sweet contentment where there was only the Duke and her overwhelming love for him.

When he released her, she felt for a moment dazed and hardly conscious of where she was. She awoke to reality at a knock on the door. The waiter had returned with the food the Duke had ordered.

What she ate or drank Iona had no idea. She could only sit beside the Duke, her hand in his, and know that her life had changed from one of drab uncertainty into a golden rapture which she was half-afraid to question.

They ate almost in silence, until after a while the Duke, drawing her to her feet and wrapping her cloak around her, said, "We must go now, my love, for there is much to do before night falls."

"What have we to do?" Iona asked wonderingly.

But he only smiled at her reassuringly and answered, "You will see!"

He threw a guinea on the table, and led Iona from the quietness of the little room at the back of the hotel into the tumult and noise outside, where a coach of claret and silver, with the ducal coat of arms emblazoned on the door, drawn by a pair of horses and attended by a coachman and two footmen, stood waiting.

The Duke handed her inside and Iona sank back against the satin-padded cushions, comparing it with the hard discomfort of the stage-coach.

They drove off, and she bent forward eagerly, looking through the windows at the streets of London—at the houses of wood and plaster with their square-paned windows, at the fine churches raising their great spires to the sky and the labyrinth of

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streets, lanes, alleys, courts and yards.

"I always wondered what London would be like," Iona exclaimed, entranced by all she saw and heard.

"I will show you all you wish to see, my darling," the Duke answered, "and then I shall take you back to Skaig. I wish above all things to be alone with you there."

The implication in his voice made her blush, but her lips smiled as she answered, "And I, too, would like that—above all things."

He drew her close to him and everything was forgotten; the horses trotted on, passing the famous clubs of St. James' Street, fine squares and elegant shops.

But Iona had eyes only for the Duke and ears only for the sweet things he was whispering to her. She was startled when finally the coach drew up outside a house.

"Where are we?" she asked a little apprehensively.

"We are in Berkeley Square," the Duke replied, "and this is the house of my aunt." Iona looked apprehensive and he added understandingly, "Do not be afraid, dear heart, I wish her to meet you."

The door of the coach was opened and the Duke assisted Iona to alight. When she entered the big hall with its pillars of green marble and its wide bronze and gilt staircase, she felt both awed and overpowered.

They walked on a thick, rose-tinted carpet up the stairway and Iona was miserably conscious of her shabby and travel-stained appearance.

For the first time she noticed the Duke's elegance, the exquisite cut of his pearl-grey velvet coat with is sapphire and diamond buttons which matched the pin in his lace cravat.

She had a glimpse of herself in the mirrors which decorated the brocade-panelled walls of the wide landing at the top of the stairs, and knew that, though her hair gleamed brightly and her eyes were huge with excitement, her gown and cloak were unworthy of a lady's drawing-room.

The footman flung open a pair of double doors.

"The Duke and Duchess of Arkrae, m'lady," he announced.

IONA had no time to recover from the surprise of hearing her title, for at the other end of an enormous, over-furnished room sat a most formidable old lady.

She was white - haired, sharp-nosed and obviously of a great age; but her glance was shrewd and penetrating as the Duke bent to kiss the claw-like hand she held out to him.

"This is a surprise, Ewan," she said in a strangely deep voice. "I had no idea you had come south."

"I have been here some days, Aunt Anne," the Duke replied, "but I have unfortunately not had the opportunity of calling upon you until now."

"And whom have you brought with you?" the old woman asked, her sharp eyes taking in every detail of Iona's appearance and being well aware of the manner in which she had been announced.

"I have the honour to present my wife," the Duke answered. "Iona, this is my aunt, my father's only surviving sister, the Dowager Countess of Tyndrum."

Iona swept to the ground in a low curtsy.

The Countess' eyes rested on her red head and she said in a voice which had a strange note in it, "Why was I not told of your marriage, Ewan? And who are your wife's relations?"

"I will answer those questions one at a time," the Duke replied, "but first permit me to offer my wife a chair. She has been travelling for some days and is, I am afraid, somewhat fatigued."

As he spoke, he drew forward a low chair and set it at the Countess' right hand; then he took up his position on the hearthrug, his back to the fire.

The Countess stared at Iona, who, conscious of her close scrutiny, felt embarrassed and glanced up appealingly at the Duke.

But his face was stern and she wondered what had upset him until he said, calmly and quietly, "You asked me two questions, Aunt Anne. First, why you had not been informed of my marriage. No one has learned of it until now save two people who were present when it took place; you are the first of the family to be told."

"I suppose I should be flattered at that," the Countess remarked.

"Indeed, I think you will be, when I tell you a little more," the Duke replied seriously. "It has some bearing upon your second question as to who are my wife's relations.

"But before I speak of that, I have a tale to unfold which I think will interest both you ladies—you, my aunt, who are a MacCraggan by birth, and Iona, my wife, who now takes her place with me at the head of the family."

"What is this story?" the Countess asked impatiently.

She picked up an ebony stick from beside her chair and held it in her hands as if the feel of it afforded her a sense of protection.

"My story is this," the Duke began. "When I was a boy, I had a favourite cousin. She was older than I; but Letricia—your only daughter, Aunt Anne—had an ageless charm for everyone who met her.

"There was, I well believe, never a man, woman or child who, having met Letricia, did not love her; and I was no exception. She was a beautiful creature, and when I went back to Eton after the holidays I used to dream of her. She was my first love and I have never forgotten her."

THE Countess made a restless movement.

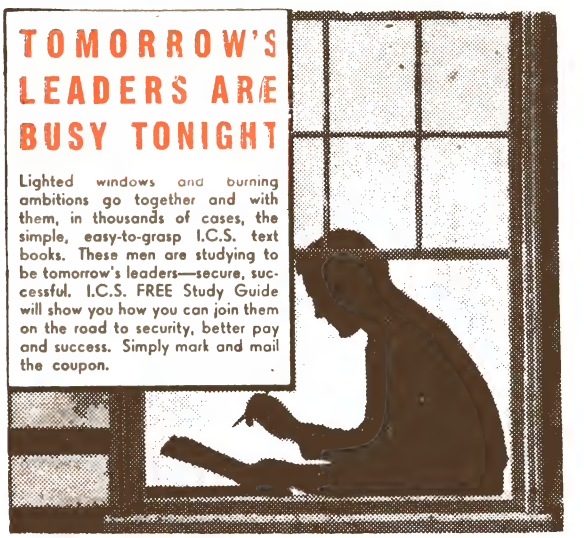
"When Letricia died," she said sharply, "few people were brave enough to speak about her—to me."

"Letricia died a long time ago," the Duke answered, "but I have not forgotten her, nor have you, Aunt Anne. No, you could never forget her, and I would remind you now how lovely Letricia looked when she first fell in love.

"That was about twenty-one years ago, wasn't it? When she fell in love with Roderick Cameron and you forbade her ever to see him again."

The Countess thumped her stick on the floor.

"Stop!" she cried. "How dare you? Be silent! These things shall not be talked of now."



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"That is where you are mistaken," the Duke replied. "These things must be talked of; they can remain secret no longer, Aunt Anne."

HIS words were so authoritative that the old woman sank back in her chair.

Her face was grim as the Duke continued. "You forbade Letricia to see Roderick Cameron; but she loved him, and one day when you were away they were married secretly.

"You knew nothing of the marriage until six months later, when Roderick was killed in a sword-fight and Letricia, broken-hearted and unable to conceal her misery, confessed the truth.

"You were incensed at her deception and even more perturbed by the knowledge that Letricia was with child.

"You were determined that her chance of social success should not be endangered. With shrewd ingenuity you made arrangements for Letricia to take a holiday in Iona.

"You had inherited a small castle there, an isolated place which no one ever visited. Letricia's child was born there. It was a girl and was christened by the only name she was ever to own—Iona."

The Duke's glance rested for one second on Iona. Her hands were clasped together, her face as she stared up at him as white as the fichu round her neck, her eyes wide with astonishment.

"After Iona was born," the Duke went on, "you sent Letricia back to Edinburgh; and taking the baby, you set sail for France.

"It was an arduous journey; but driven by your determination to save the daughter you loved from what you thought was a reckless, insane marriage, you were prepared to endure any discomfort, to surmount any difficulty.

"You reached France and went to Paris where your cousin, James Drummond, lived in exile.

"You two had always been fond of one another—he had once wished to marry you—and persuaded by your distress, he agreed to take the child and bring her up.

"Before you left, you made him vow by all that he held most sacred that he would never reveal to your granddaughter who she was or who were her parents.

"You returned to Scotland. Within a year you had contrived to marry Letricia, who was too miserable to care what happened to her, to the Marquis of Kinbrace.

"A year after that she died in childbirth and her baby with her. And so you lost your second grandchild, Aunt Anne."

There was a pause, a pause in which neither the Countess nor Iona moved.

Then the Duke went on, "When I first saw Iona, my wife, she reminded me of someone. For a short while I could not think who it was; and then I remembered only one MacCraggan who had that peculiar combination of red hair and green eyes.

"It was obvious, when I compared the two, that Iona was a MacCraggan, but of which branch of the family I was not sure. But when she told me inadvertently that she had been born in Iona, I stumbled on my first clue to the truth.

"You had covered your tracks skilfully, Aunt Anne, but servants have long memories. Not far from Skaig there live an old couple who were at one time caretakers in your castle at Iona.

"I talked to them. They were loyal, but they were not clever enough to deceive me, and I pretended to know a lot more than I did. Gradually the whole story revealed itself.

"When I was in Paris a short time ago, I visited a lady who had devoted many years of her life to looking after Rory MacCraggan. He was a first cousin of yours, and I am sure you remember him well.

"I went to Paris to collect some heirlooms which he had taken into exile, and which I considered should be brought back to Skaig. The woman with whom Rory had lived spoke to me of James Drummond.

"She was but recounting tales of other exiles who had fled to France after the Rising in '15. She happened to mention that James Drummond was dead, and she wondered what had happened to his ward — a pretty girl with red hair and green eyes who had always seemed so devoted to him.

"Remembering this, it was not very difficult to piece the story together afterwards, Aunt Anne; the story of Letricia, your daughter — and the story of Iona, your granddaughter."

THE Duke's voice died away but seemed to linger in the very atmosphere. Iona started to her feet. "Is this true?" she asked in a bewildered voice, "really true?"

"You must ask your grandmother that question," the Duke answered softly.

Iona looked down at the old lady. The Countess' knuckles were white and she gripped her ebony stick with all the strength that was left in her.

For a moment Iona thought she was about to cry out and denounce the Duke as a fabricator of lies; then she saw that the old lady was crying. Impulsively, Iona knelt down beside her chair.

"Am I really your granddaughter?" she asked, and her voice trembled.

The tears ran slowly down the Countess' wrinkled cheeks. She put up her hand and touched Iona's cheek.

For a moment she could not speak; and when she could, she said brokenly, "You are very like Letricia, my dear."

For a moment the two women clung to each other and both their faces were wet with tears; then the Duke drew Iona to her feet.

"There are two things I would ask, Aunt Anne. One is that we may stay here tonight, and the other that to-morrow you will give a reception at which you will present Iona to your friends."

The Countess looked up at him and wiped her eyes with a lace-edged handkerchief.

"It shall be as you wish, Ewan," she said. "I am too old to fight against you or anyone else. It shall be as you wish."

The Duke drew a watch from his waistcoat pocket.

"And now for a short while we must leave you," he said. "We will return for dinner, but before then we have another call to make."

Instinctively Iona looked down at her dress and the Duke said with a smile, "If you hurry, you have time to change."

"Change?" Iona questioned.

The Duke nodded. "I brought your trunk with me, and Cathy, too, in case you should need her. When we arrived here, I sent the coach to fetch her from the hotel where I have been staying pending your arrival.

"If I am not mistaken, she will at this moment be downstairs in the hall waiting to hear if Aunt Anne will accept us as her guests or if we must repair to an hotel."

"You must both stay here, of course," the Countess said, and for a moment a faint, wintry smile twisted her lips. "You meant to have your way whatever I might say to the contrary. You don't deceive me, my boy."

"I'm glad of that," the Duke replied, and bent to help the Countess to rise from her chair.

With one hand she supported herself on her ebony stick, with the other she reached up and touched Iona's red curls.

"You are very like Letricia," she said again, "and I loved my daughter. Make what arrangements you wish, children; I am going to bed. I have a feeling that you would prefer the house to yourselves.

"I must gather my strength for the morrow when I shall present my grand-daughter—my only grandchild — to the *beau-monde*."

She went slowly across the room. The Duke turned to Iona.

"Change quickly," he said. "I can allow you but twenty minutes. Can you manage in that time?"

"Of course I can," Iona smiled.

But it was difficult, because there was so much she wanted to tell Cathy.

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But in twenty minutes Iona's hair was skilfully arranged, and she was arrayed in a gown of blue muslin sprigged with flowers.

SHE was ready to descend the stairs in order to join him, when there came a knock on the door. The Countess' maid stood outside.

"Her Ladyship's compliments," she said to Cathy, "and she thought Her Grace might wish to borrow a fur cape as the evenings are growing cold.

"She also asked me to inform Her Grace that she has ordered her dressmaker to call early to-morrow morning, for Her Ladyship is sure Her Grace will require many gowns for her trousseau."

Cathy brought the wrap to Iona, who gave a little cry of pleasure at the sight of it.

Excited and thrilled beyond measure she ran downstairs. There the Duke was waiting.

"You are very punctual, my darling," he said, and added, "There is one thing I wanted to ask you before we leave. Have you the Tears of Torrish in your possession?"

Iona nodded. "Indeed I have," she replied, "for I have worn them next to my heart for fear they should be stolen from me."

She drew them from her bosom and the Duke looked down at the three diamonds gleaming in the palm of her hand.

"Bring them with you," he said, and before she could ask him any questions he led the way to the coach outside.

As they drove off, the Duke put his arm round Iona and felt the softness of the sable cloak.

"Sables? You are getting very grand," he teased.

"Your aunt — I mean, my grandmother — lent them to me. Was it not kind of her?"

"There are so many things that I want to give you," the Duke said, holding Iona a little closer to him. "Furs and jewellery among them.

"There are some family diamonds which will become you well and we shall have to give a ball especially so that I can see you wearing the emerald tiara."

"Do not say too much," Iona begged him, "it frightens me. I only feel safe and secure when I am alone with you; but oh, when I think that I need no longer hide my head in shame, that I have a name at last . . ."

"You have indeed," the Duke answered. "You are the Duchess of Arkrae."

"And I am also a Cameron," Iona answered, "and half a MacCraggan — your second cousin! At times I feel as if my heart would burst with the excitement of it all."

"Just because you have a name?" the Duke asked.

"No, more than that," Iona replied, "because of you—oh, but you know that."

"Yes, I know it," the Duke answered, and pressed his cheek against hers.

For a moment she was still, then she turned impulsively towards him.

"You are sure you love me," she asked, "quite, quite sure? You are so clever and I am so ignorant; you have great traditions behind you, I have nothing."

In answer he drew her into his arms with an almost fierce strength.

"You are all I ask for in the whole world," he said. "Is that nothing?"

SHE had found no words to answer him when the coach drew up at a house in Pall Mall. It was a big house and the windows were shuttered.

There was somehow, Iona thought as the door opened into a dimly-lit hall, an air of secrecy about it.

The Duke spoke to a flunkey who led them down a long passage. He opened the door of a room at the end of it and announced, "The Duke and Duchess of Arkrae, m'lord."

For a moment Iona thought she had been here before. There was a little company of gentlemen seated round the table and the room was lit with but a few candles.

The shutters were closed, the shadows dark and mysterious. Then Iona saw a face she knew.

"Colonel Brett!" she ejaculated in astonishment and looked round to see who else was there.

She saw a figure seated in a chair at the far end of the table. He rose and came forward to her. As Iona sank to the ground in a deep curtsy, he extended his hand.

"Oh, sire, sire," she muttered.

"You had not thought to see me here?" the Prince asked. "And I had not expected to see you, Arkrae."

The Duke bowed. "My wife, sire, has something to impart to Your Royal Highness."

Silently Iona held out the three Tears of Torrish.

"Those are all that are left, sire. I found them, but . . ."

The Prince looked down into her hand.

"The Tears of Torrish, by Gad! But only three. Who is fortunate enough to have the rest?"

Iona glanced at the Duke. Understanding the appeal in her eyes, he told the Prince briefly what had occurred.

"I must count myself lucky that all were not lost," the Prince said, "but what is more important is that you have brought me not only diamonds, but your husband, my dear."

HIS hand rested on Iona's arm, then he turned towards the Duke. "I am sadly in need of your help, Arkrae," he said. "I have been talking here with His Grace of Beaufort and my Lord Westmorland.

"I have asked them for five thousand men, that is all; but they tell me they cannot provide me with even five hundred at this moment. Can you be of greater service?"

The Duke drew a deep breath.

Quietly he replied, "If it were possible, sire, I would give you fifty thousand and myself at the head of them; but I could on my own land raise but a hundred or so, and we can be certain of no support from the other clans.

"They are scattered and ruined, our people tortured, imprisoned, disarmed and transported. The Highlands are still loyal to you in their hearts, but we cannot fight without men, without weapons.

"Time may enable us to tell another tale; but if you ask me to speak for Scotland, sire, I can but tell you the truth—bitter though it may be."

The Prince looked at the men seated round the table. "Arkrae says the same as you, my lords. There is nothing for me but to return to France."

He turned towards Iona and holding the three Tears of Torrish between his fingers, placed them in her hand.

"You found these for me in Scotland," he said; "that is where they belong. Use them as you and your husband think fit to help those who have suffered, to succour those who are in need because they have followed a Stuart."

"Oh, sire, that is indeed generous," Iona exclaimed.

The Prince shook his head.

"I only ask that sometimes when you are in Scotland," he said, "you will remember a man whose happiest time of his life was spent there—hunted and pursued, yet loved by the people who helped him.

"Yes, I ask only that those in Scotland should remember me, for I can never forget Scotland."

The Prince's voice was deep with emotion, and Iona's eyes were blinded with tears as he walked away from her across the room.

THE END

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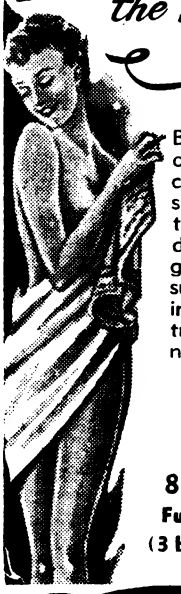

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The Stars in their Courses

By REX GRAYSON

To be under the influence of Sirius is disastrous, although apparently a lot of trouble can be averted if Venus takes a hand.

FOUR o'clock brought the junior typist with tea. Old Jarvis, the cashier, looked in at a quarter to five. At half past, to take things in chronological order—but wait, Time's grey forelock cannot be grasped quite so ruthlessly. Miss Komisski had tripped over something, spilling the tea into the saucer to the detriment of the biscuits. Today Sirius was to blame.

"Sirius?" inquired Dan.

"Yes, Mr. Herriot. The Dog Star, you know."

Dan knew the Dog Star, but he didn't make the connection. Miss Komisski explained that this particular Friday was under the influence of the evil luminary, whose power grew more malign as the day wore on. She offered to bring her book, *Astrology for You*, to prove it. Dan advised her not to bother, and enquired about the roses she was carrying.

"Aren't they beautiful, Mr. Herriot? I simply adore this deep red shade. Mr. Jarvis gave them to me. He grows simply marvellous roses. These are called *Mrs. Susan Jarvis*—after his late wife, you know. It's rather romantic, really."

Miss Komisski sighed and hovered for a moment.

"Oh, Mr. Herriot, I wonder if you are still looking for a flat?"

"From what I hear it's a lifetime job."

"I thought perhaps Mr. Jarvis might have found one for you. They say he has a lot of property."

"He hasn't mentioned it."

"Then, perhaps . . ." Miss Komisski laid a scrap of paper on the desk. "Here's the address. It's a very tiny place, but it might suit you. Mr. Clyde, a very nice young man, has been living in it, but he suddenly decided to leave. I particularly asked my uncle Mr. Blaustein, not to let it to anyone until you'd seen it."

"Very good of you, Miss Komisski," said Dan gratefully.

"It's only a small house, you understand. I don't suppose you have a dog?"

"I could get one if it's essential."

"Oh, no, Mr. Herriot, the Blausteins would rather you didn't." Miss Komisski was scarcely old enough to understand young men who do not smile when they mean to be funny. "Mr. Clyde kept a very large one—a beautiful Alsatian. We're looking after it for him now. My uncle did not mind, but Mr. Scattergood, next door, complained terribly. He's easily disturbed."

"Under no circumstances would I irritate Mr. Scattergood," said Dan. "Thanks a lot, Miss Komisski. I'll see your uncle right away."

"He lives on the ground floor. Of course, it would be a bit cramped if you are thinking of getting married, Mr. Herriot."

Dan believed not. After all, he was probably no more than a vague idea in the mind of the girl at Brinkman's Bookery. If that. Miss Komisski informed him that Cawnpore Square was quite a select neighbourhood, that her people lived two blocks away and that Mr. Clyde was quite-good-looking, except for his red hair, though she rather liked it herself. Dan thanked her again and bade her watch out for Sirius.

"THE first of many, I hope," Jarvis dumped Dan's pay envelope on the desk. He, too, was new since Dan had been away, though anything but new in every other way. "It must be very nice for you to be back with us, Mr. Herriot. I'm afraid, though, that you won't find the world quite the same as it was before you went. Sometimes I don't know what to make of things at all." The old man sighed deeply. "I suppose I'm out of date, but really I get quite alarmed sometimes when I think of it. The old standards, Mr. Herriot, seem to have gone. People don't mind how they make money, so long as they get it. Well, well, I mustn't worry you with my complaints. Have you managed to find lodgings yet?"

"I've just heard of a chance of getting a flat."

"Flat, Mr. Herriot?" Jarvis shook his grey head dubiously. "Personally, I have always deprecated flat life. A rose-grower of forty years' standing, you know—one likes the open spaces. For a bachelor, I think a nice respectable boarding-house is so much better. But then, I am a back number . . ."

He shuffled towards the door, walking as always as if wearing run-down slippers. His benign, clean-shaven face and steel-rimmed spectacles gave him something the air of a retired clergyman. The large rose he wore in his button-hole struck a rather incongruous note in his drab ensemble. It was not easy to imagine him as a man of property. An office rumour, most likely.

At the door, he turned, to go into a paroxysm of tut-tutting.

"Oh, dear, oh dear! I almost forgot. Mr. Langton would like a word with you before you leave. I should have mentioned it at first." He paused uncertainly. "Have you had much to say to Mr. Langton, yet?"

"He's hardly noticed me."

"I would not be disconcerted, Mr. Herriot. Mr. Langton is a very pleasant man under the surface. A young fellow like you will probably get on very well with him. If I might offer a word of advice, I would not stress military matters when talking to him. Mr. Langton is not what one might call—er—aggressively patriotic. Moreover, I understand that you were a—um—pugilist before you joined the army."

Dan laughed.

"Only an amateur. 'Pugilist' is hardly the term."

"I know very little about such things," said Jarvis. "However I would not bring it under Mr. Langton's notice. I think he would be—er—unimpressed."

"How did he come here in the first place?"

"I understand that he bought Mr. Fitzmaurice's interest when he died. I sometimes think he would have dispensed with my services had he been able to replace me." Jarvis looked a little confused, like an archdeacon who had said the wrong thing. "If I were you, I should avoid argument with Mr. Langton. He is not a man one can set right, and, in addition, I think he has private troubles. I speak advisedly, Mr. Herriot."

Jarvis always spoke advisedly, even when commenting on the weather.

LANGTON had certainly altered the managerial set-up. The furniture had changed from mahogany to chrome steel, and Mr. Fitzmaurice's old roll-top desk had given place to a table shod with plate-glass on which the blotter looked no bigger than a postage-stamp. Dan sat down and watched him sign letters, undersigning his signature with an elaborate flourish. A thin, almost emaciated man, in the late forties, he dressed with studied conservatism. There was a House of Commons touch about the stiff white collar, the smartly-cut black coat and vest, and the sedately striped trousers.

The telephone tinkled.

"Please see who that is, Mr. Herriot. I told the girl I was not to be disturbed."

Dan picked up the receiver.

"That you, Mr. Lang-Langton?"

"Mr. Langton's very busy. Who's speaking?"

"That doesn't mat-matter." The speaker was handicapped by a curious sing-song stammer. "T-tell him it's urgent."

Dan passed over the phone.

"Who is it?" Langton's thin face, so smooth and wax-like that one could have sworn it to be hairless, went a shade paler with anger. "No. Certainly not. Definitely no. Tell your principal that, whoever he is. Not another penny. That's final." He slammed down the receiver. "Oh, yes, Herriot, we were saying . . ."

"Nothing as yet," said Dan. "I understand from Mr. Jarvis . . ."

"Quite. Quite." Langton's right hand drummed on the blotter. The left stroked his thinning hair. "I did have something I wanted to mention but it's gone from my mind for the moment . . . Oh, yes. It's a week since you rejoined the firm. Are you settling down all right?"

"I'm having no trouble, sir."

Langton seemed suspicious rather than gratified. Apparently it was his conviction that every discharged service man seethed with unrest, and he did not like having his opinion shaken.

"You were very young when you joined the Army?"

"Not so very. Twenty-four."

"We are passing through a very difficult period, Herriot. Reaction has set in . . . slackness . . ." As Langton's fingers drummed, the facets of a large diamond winked back the light with almost hypnotic effect. "I gather that you were on our staff for several years before you went to Malaya and Korea. Naturally we are glad to be able to re-employ you, but I should like to make it clear that things are not exactly what they were in Mr. Fitzmaurice's time. I demand a high standard of efficiency, and though I am certain you will measure up, it would be useful for you to remember that civil life is not military life. I need not stress that point, I am sure."

Dan's first impulse was to tell Mr. Langton where to go. He swallowed it back and merely nodded. No use getting hot under the collar at the end of his first week back. Better to wait and see. Possibly the man meant well, even though his mind was palpably wandering from the point, whatever that may have been. He concluded the interview by rising abruptly and ringing for Miss Komisski.

Unimpressed by his first glimpse of the new managing director, Dan went back to his own room. He looked through the window into Grieve's Lane, the blind alley on which the offices of the International Indent Company opened. It was growing dark and most of the staff had already gone. Dan could just see the top of Mr. Langton's shining Rolls Royce. Another sedan was backing down the lane towards it. He wondered what Langton would say if he found himself blocked in. Nothing verly polite, probably.

DAN picked up his towel and went to the washroom. Had he not done so, he might have realised that what he thought was a backfire was a revolver shot . . .

Actually he knew nothing at all until he went down into the chill of the autumn evening. By then some score of scared and fascinated people had collected, and the light from the bracket over the doorway shone on a couple of police helmets. One constable was ordering back the too curious, the other was talking quietly to the distracted Jarvis. On the running-board of the Rolls sat Miss Komisski crying hysterically into a crumpled handkerchief. Her eyes were as enormous as those of a terrified child.

It was as unreal as a scene from a hurriedly-produced amateur play. Not only were the lines badly written, but with the possible exception of the policemen and Mr. Langton the actors did not seem to know them. Langton's role, however, was merely to sprawl behind the wheel of his magnificent car, with, as make-up, a spodge of blood where his face had been. Old Jarvis, a broken man, kept repeating "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" and fluttering his hands. There seemed no part for Dan unless it were to reassure Miss Komisski. He had some success there, for she stopped crying and stared at him with blurred eyes.

It took time and a carload from police headquarters to sort things out. Dan eventually gathered that Langton had stepped into his car and blown his horn authoritatively to clear the way, whereupon a man had climbed quickly from the sedan in front, walked back to the window of the Rolls and, after a word or two with Langton, coolly shot him through the head. This much Miss Komisski had seen as she emerged from the doorway.

She had, indeed, seen more. At the sound of the shot the second man had jumped from the car in front and run like a frightened rabbit down the lane, merely increasing his pace when his companion called on him to stop. He had vanished into the gloom of the narrow pedestrian walk at the blind end of the alley. It led

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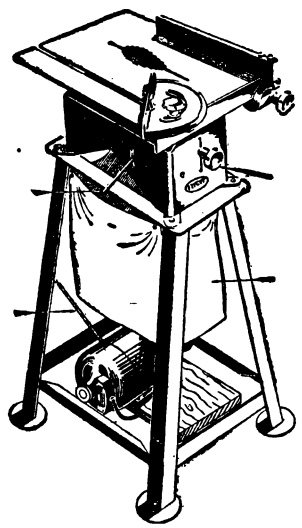

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into the street, heavy with peak-hour traffic.

The killer had made no attempt to follow his apparently panic-stricken comrade. Slamming the door of the car, the engine of which was still running, he drove away, leaving Miss Komisski screaming in the doorway, so shaken, that, in the gathering darkness, she had been unable to observe either the number of the car, or the faces of the men.

"Please send her home in a taxi, Mr. Herriot," said Jarvis, tremulously. "Under these shocking circumstances, I really think the office should pay."

ALTHOUGH Dan himself had not been detained long, it was later than he intended when he reached Brinkman's Bookery. The light within was painfully dim, penetrating into the surburban street with difficulty, as if its light and brilliance were absorbed by the myriad of dusty volumes stored within. Only an optimist, thought Dan, would become a dealer in secondhand books, for who could hope to sell more than a tithe of all these mouldy tomes? Or did Brinkman really *want* to sell them? He sat all day in the little room at the back, reading forgotten newspapers and making indecipherable notes for some never-to-be-published anthology. Nothing annoyed him so much as the sound of a bell announcing a customer, which in any event he could scarcely hear.

Dan rang it now. After a time Brinkman came waddling out, his reading glasses poised above his bushy grey eyebrows, the remains of a cigarette dangerously thrust into the centre of his drooping moustache. Dan's spirits sank. Perhaps she was out.

"Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*? There is a set here, but we are keeping it for someone."

"For me, I believe," said Dan, briskly.

"For you? I don't seem to remember . . ." Brinkman stared at him with the slight suspicion of the very deaf, and then went to the narrow staircase leading to the mysterious book-filled regions above. "Nola! Are you there? Please attend to this gentleman." He turned to Dan. "You must excuse me. I am very busy. I am working against time."

Dan leaned back against a colossal pile of dog-eared school textbooks and looked expectantly at the stairs. His pulse-rate quickened. He had known so many girls who had meant so little—strange that this one should, in a flash, have come to mean so very much. A chance encounter among her grandfather's dusty stock, some talk, a little quiet laughter, and mischief was done. To Dan, at all events. To her? He did not know what she thought, nor would he rush things to find out. This was no starshell, to light up the whole world for a moment, and then fizzle out.

She smiled at him from the turn in the stairs. It was like music, drowning the memory of that grim scene in Grieve's Lane — drowning, indeed, the memory of even grimmer scenes in the last few years. I'm right, he thought, not without wonder. This is the girl. She and I can make it together if we get any sort of chance. But let me hold this. Let me remember her coming down the stairs in this fusty old place, the friendly brightness of her eyes, that half-shy smile of welcome.

"I thought you weren't coming . . ."

"I was held up. Something —well, 'unforseen' puts it far too mildly. I'll tell you about it afterwards. I'm sorry if I kept you."

"It didn't matter. I've been quite busy." She dived beneath the counter and brought up a big square package of books. "You're not really going to read them all?"

"That was the original idea. I always wanted to know just what made the Roman Empire decline and fall."

"I hope the answer is here. What made you interested?"

"Marching over so much of it at different times, I suppose. I could tell you about that, if ever you care to listen. Not here, though."

From the other room came angry muttering. Old Brinkman was writing furiously, pausing only to wet the end of a pencil. Nola glanced at him and back to Dan. There was laughter in her eyes, and tenderness too.

"He's happy. Not many people are when they're old."

"What a great reason for being happy when you're young," said Dan. "I suppose you wouldn't care to have dinner with me?"

"I make it a rule never to go out with customers, Mr. Herriot."

"I've stopped being a customer. These books will keep me going for the rest of my life. If you eat with me, Miss Ashton doesn't eat with Mr. Herriot. Nola eats with Dan. Would there be any reason why she couldn't, or wouldn't . . . or shouldn't?"

She looked at him squarely. He was, she thought, the sort

of man, who, as a small boy, is almost fascinatingly ugly—a mass of freckles, snub nose and twinkling eyes. Sometimes they grow into big, powerful easy men like this. It was odd.

"Well, is there?"

"I'm thinking."

"Don't try too hard."

"I don't know of anything."

"Then you'll come?" he asked eagerly.

"I'd love to."

The telephone rang in the inner room. Brinkman put down his pencil in a rage.

"Nola! Nola! Please come and stop this dreadful thing."

The telephone was hidden behind the door. Dan wondered at anything so modern being in such a shop. As the bell stopped ringing, Brinkman, relieved, resumed writing and muttering.

Dan's mind reverted to that strange and horrible business, the shooting of Langton. He was glad he had not known Langton better. Even so, it was impossible to take a completely detached view of the murder of a man with whom you have been talking a few moments before. The police, of course, were very matter-of-fact about it. That was the professional viewpoint, Dan supposed, like that of a doctor who regarded with equanimity all physical troubles but his own. He remembered the stammering man who had rung up. It was unlikely that it had any bearing on the matter, but it might be as well to mention it to the detectives. Dan felt sorry for Miss Komisski, who might eventually have to appear as a principal Crown witness. It would be a nasty ordeal for a girl. Sirius had certainly done his worst for her.

The bell tinkled faintly as the receiver was replaced. In a moment or two Nola came into the shop again. Something had happened to her in the meantime. She looked different. Her face was drawn and tense and the sparkle had gone from her eyes, and, though the smile was still there, there was nothing behind it.

"I'm awfully sorry, Dan, I can't go out with you."

"Can't?" said Dan, incredulously. "You mean can't?"

She shook her head.

"Why not? I don't see it. What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"But that's ridiculous. You said just now . . ."

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "I hate disappointing you. Honestly I do, but I can't go. It's quite impossible."

DAN left Brinkman's Bookery depressed and angry. Nola had practically pushed him out of the shop and closed the door. Nor had she offered a word in explanation. The telephone call was a clue, of course, but why not tell him so, straight out? Damn it, he thought, in exasperation, a man isn't unreasonable. Why the evasion? Why leave imagination to supply the missing words? Obviously she had not told him the truth; there must be, after all, someone with more claim than he had—someone who had telephoned his intention of appearing forthwith. If so, all right; he could take it. But why not tell him?

It was too late to dine at his hotel. He had projected taking Nola where there were lights and gaiety and music, but instead he ate alone and indifferently at a little cafe, his appetite affronted by a resilient pie made from scrap rubber and liquid glue. Sirius was certainly putting on the pressure. It might be just as well to let him have all the rope he needed, and ruin the rest of the evening by inspecting Miss Komisski's uncle's undoubtedly foul flat. No matter what happened, either, at the International Indent Company or at Brinkman's Bookery, he would still need some place to live.

A tram ride, and he located Cawnpore Square amid a Sahara of houses. In the centre was an oasis of grass, a playground for children by day, and the trysting place of cats after dark. Number 15 was a small and ancient dwelling boldly furnished forth with a plot of lawn and some shrubs. The upper works were in darkness, but lights showed with surburban furtiveness at a lower window. A baby car stood outside.

Mr. Blaustein answered the bell. He and his wife were on the point of leaving for a birthday party. Dan gathered that Mr. Blaustein was the life and soul of such fixtures and he had already been priming himself for that part.

"Take the key and have a look for yourself," he said genially. "Mr. Clyde isn't in."

"But if he comes in?"

"He said we could show anyone through. Very nice young fellow, Mr. Clyde. He hardly ever gets in before midnight."

Dan gathered that Mr. Clyde was the ideal tenant, easy-going, prompt paying. The only liability was the dog.

"Why anyone wants to keep a great clumping Alsatian beats me," Mr. Blaustein de-

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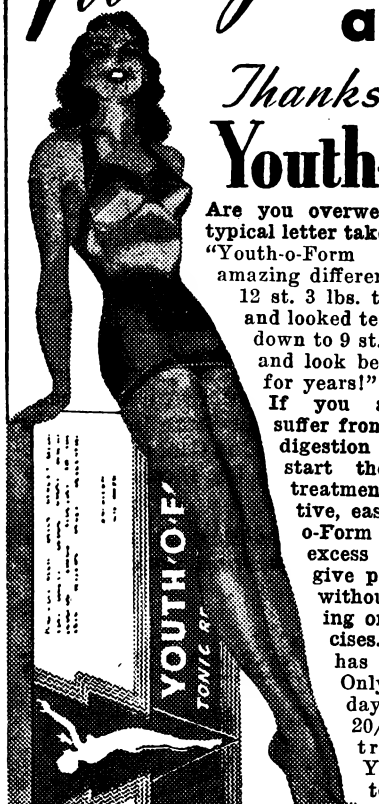

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clared. "The Komisskis will soon have enough of it. Mr. Scattergood was always complaining. He'll have some peace now it's gone."

The Blausteins drove away, leaving Dan with the key of the flat, and instructions where to leave it when he went.

The upper story was merely a shrewdly-converted attic, approached by an outside staircase, at the top of which the door opened off a small landing. As Dan had been warned, the place was very small. To the right of the entrance vestibule was a cupboard of a kitchen, strewn with ample testimony of Mr. Clyde's last hurried meal. To the left was a bathroom in which an undersized man might have dried himself by standing in the doorway. Straight ahead was one of those known to the trade as a "bed-sit."

At the moment it was more bed than sit, for Mr. Clyde had left the floor strewn with blankets, sheets and pillows, on top of which was flung a pair of incredibly gay pyjamas. All this, of course, was easily understood by one acquainted with the exigencies of bachelor life—what could not so readily be accounted for was the photograph of Nola Ashton.

Ivory-framed, it held the place of honour in the middle of a littered mantelshelf. There was no possibility of error; it was most certainly Nola, and not some other girl who by chance resembled her. Not—justice forced Dan to admit—that there was anything against Nola giving her portrait to a hundred men if she wished, but self-esteem recoiled at the thought that this was the spirit in which she had received his own tentative advances. Apparently Miss Komisski was not the only girl who found this red-headed young man attractive.

The door creaked. Dan turned sharply, expecting to confront Mr. Clyde himself, his hair bristling with astonishment. But the door did not open, it merely rattled, as if someone pushed against it. It was up to Dan to take the initiative. He stepped through the two-by-one vestibule.

"That you Mr. Clyde?"

No reply. He opened the door, and a monstrous Alsatian dog walked in, to stand gazing at him with lowered head and tail ominously still.

DAN HERRIOT liked dogs. He also subscribed to the ill-founded theory that if a man possesses any merit, no matter how insignificant, a dog will immediately recognise it. This animal appeared weak on psychology, though strong enough in every other direction. If the Alsatian was predominate, there were traces of other breeds even more awe-inspiring. He had the deep chest of a mastiff and the coldly suspicious eye of a traffic cop. Attached to a collar was the end of a broken rope. It was plain to see that he was Mr. Clyde's dog, escaped from the thraldom of the Komisskis and returned to his old home.

"Hello, old man," said Dan, adding with the illogicality of the dog-worshipper, "Good boy!"

The good boy growled throatily, showing a bone-cracking set of teeth. Plainly he was uncertain whether to fawn on Dan or eat him. Dan tried to sidestep him and gain the door, but the dog was prepared for the evasive action and crouched menacingly. The growl deepened. The dental display became more impressive. Feeling in imagination those long fangs clashing together in his flesh, Dan sprang back into the bed-sit and slammed the door, just as the outrageous animal smacked into it like a blunt end of a battering ram. After a shameful outburst of canine profanity, he started to scratch his way through the panels, while Dan tried to talk him out of it.

Time went by at a slow march. Just as the prisoner was meditating the possibility of escaping through the window, which involved a sixteen-foot drop in what was probably a prickly shrub, he heard footsteps on the stairs. They drew closer, stopping on the landing. The dog's growling changed to a throaty chuckle of welcome. Then a voice:

"Why, hello, Rajah! What on earth are you doing here?"

It was Nola Ashton.

DAN stood stupefied, while Nola conducted a one-sided conversation with the excited dog, at the same time trying to restrain the animal's foolish and elephantine caperings.

"Down, Rajah, down! Don't pull at me." Apparently Rajah was trying to give his version of the affair. "What's wrong with you, silly?"

"Nola!" The bedevilled young man thought he had better get a word in. "I say, Nola!"

"Who's that?" cried Nola, sharply. "Who's in there? Lie down, Rajah!"

"It's all right. It's Dan Herriot. Don't you recognise my voice."

"In there? Dan Herriot?" In four words Nola ran up the entire scale of incredulity. Then she came down again, more slowly. "Hadn't you better come out?"

"And let that infernal dog tear me to pieces?"

"You're not afraid of Rajah? He's as gentle of a lamb."

She flung open the door. Rajah was now lying at her feet gazing up with an adoration that was almost embarrassing. His look certainly hardened a little at sight of Dan, but a word from the girl and his tail swept the floor like a broom.

"He was a man-eater five minutes ago," said Dan. "You should call him Jekyll and Hyde."

"Never mind that. I don't understand what you're doing here."

"I came to look at Mr. Clyde's flat, of course. The people who own it went out and left me the key."

Succinct though the explanation was, it seemed to Dan as though she had forgotten he was there. Her impatient glance roved the untidy room almost as though she was not listening. She was wearing a hat and coat and had, he noticed, brought a small suitcase with her.

"And then that damned dog showed up," he finished lamely. "You're not listening."

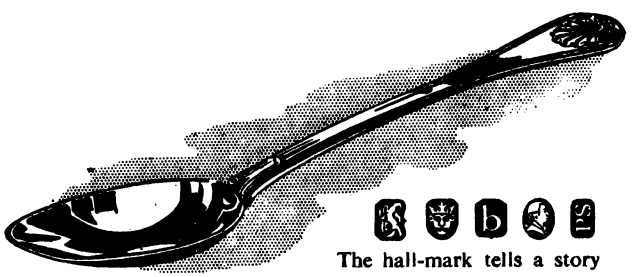
"Of course I'm listening," she flashed back. "The dog came back. He ran away, I suppose. I thought the people who had him had brought him back."

"I wouldn't blame them," said Dan bitterly.

"Have you seen the flat?"

"Meaning that there's nothing to keep me?" he retorted hotly. "Well, there may be. Suppose I ask a question now? You told me you'd come to dinner with me. Then someone rings up and you change your mind. No reason given — no explanation — nothing! Now you march in here with a suitcase in your hand, and this man Clyde's dog eats out of your hand. What's the answer to that one?"

"Lots of people have beastly ideas—that's the answer." A less angry and more observant man would have seen the tenseness of her expression



Who, when and where ?

The hall-mark on this fine table-spoon denotes that it is sterling silver (the lion), that it was made by the famous silversmith, Paul Storr (initials), in the year 1817 (letter b), in London (leopard's head). The sovereign's head (George III) shows that duty was paid on the spoon.

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and that her hands were clenched until the knuckles showed white. "How was I to know you'd be one of them?"

"What's your photograph doing there?"

"I can have my photograph on posters for all it matters to you, Dan Herriot." She flung the suitcase open. It was empty. "Now will you go."

Rajah started barking furiously at someone coming up the stairs. Two men appeared on the landing. One was undersized, dark and smiling, his skin had a pink-veined pallor of the whisky addict. The other was big and flabby and had a face as grey and blank as a gaol wall. It was the first who spoke.

"I hated to spend the money as much as you, dear, but it was either that, or do without!"

"Good evening. B-best grab that d-dog, miss. It would be very un-unfortunate if he t-tried to bite me."

Dan scarcely noticed the revolver he pulled from the pocket of his long black overcoat. His mind was focused on the voice—the slow voice with the queer impediment, the sing-song repetitions. Here, beyond all question, was the man who had telephoned Bernard Langton just before he went out to die.

THE pair stepped inside. "I trust we do n-not in-intrude?" the little man said anxiously. He had the apologetic bearing of a junior employee called before the board of directors. "We are m-merely look-looking for Mr. Clyde."

"Mr. Clyde isn't here," Dan took it upon himself to answer. "What's the idea, barging in here with a gun? Who are you, anyway?"

"This is Clyde's flat," said the other man.

"L-leave this to me, Greg," interposed his comrade, hastily.

"Well, then, push on with it. They think you're fooling. You'll have that big guy laughing at you in a minute."

"I b-believe not. He's a cool hand, and I ad-admire him for it, but I d-don't think he sees anything to l-laugh at. Where's Mr. C-Clyde, please?"

"I haven't an idea. I told you just now that he's not here. You can see for yourself he hasn't come since. You'd best get out of this before I send for the police."

Greg laughed abruptly. His harsh mirth had all the unexpectedness of an earth tremor. His friend shook his head.

"T-there's no n-need for the police. The l-last thing we want is t-trouble with them."

"You ask the girl, Barney," Greg broke in. "The boss'll get sour if you waste time like this. Ask the girl. She'll know. They go round together a lot. I've seen her with Clyde more than once."

"That so?" said Barney with interest. "Well, n-now, that s-simplifies matters. If Mr. Clyde's a friend of yours, miss . . ."

"Leave the lady out," said Dan quietly. "She's nothing to do with this. She and I came to look at this place together. She's never heard of Clyde."

Dan was studying the hand holding the revolver. It dominated the situation, but it was only a small hand, attached to a wrist almost as delicately made as a woman's. Once that wrist was in his own powerful paw, something was bound to happen to it. It was taking a chance, but Dan had taken plenty of chances in the past five years. Anything was better than standing there like a fool while two thugs put it all over him.

"G-Greg," said Barney, "would you mind having a l-look round while I question the young l-lady? It may be that Mr. C-Clyde is n-not so far away as we think."

As he spoke, Barney turned his red-rimmed eyes ever so slightly. No better opportunity would come. Dan dived for the hand holding the gun, and, while mentally telling the Marquis of Queensberry to look the other way, he lashed out with his right foot. Both connected. Barney, struck on the inside of the knee, screamed shrilly. It was a startling sound. He screamed again as Dan's fingers sank into his wrist, twisting it fiercely, but despite his agony he hung on until Dan belted him in the pit of his stomach. At that he doubled up like a carpenter's rule. He fell to the floor. As Dan reached for the gun, he heard Nola's terrified warning.

"Dan, look out!"

Unfortunately, that sort of warning generally comes too late. From the tail of his eyes, Dan saw Greg brandishing something short and heavy, but there was nothing he could do about it. An extinguisher filled with flying tracer bullets dropped neatly over him, blacking him out.

HE awoke in darkness and misery. His head ached with the throbbing persistence of some outsize in hangovers, while the top of his skull rose and fell like the lid of a kettle. Nor, though more than enough, was this all. Beside him a dog howled, while at some indeterminate distance a furious hammering added the last intolerable touch.

"Shut up, for God's sake," said Dan weakly. The howling stopped and a wet sponge, warm and sticky, was thrust against his face. He pushed it away, and discovered it to be attached to the hairy snout of a dog. Dan rose with difficulty to his feet, fell over a chair, and crashed into a table. The hammering increased in violence, and a man shouted, "Hey there! You in there!" The dog barked, putting the copingstone on Bedlam.

Dan told everything to go to hell and, leaning against the table, let his mind grope through this chaos until things fell into line. The hammering and shouting were outside. He found a switch and turned on a light, which hurt his eyes.

"Stop that row and come in," he said. Perhaps it was Mr. Blaustein. Perhaps it was Mr. Clyde. Either way, who cared? The point was, where was Nola?

The empty suitcase lay on the floor, together with Nola's handbag, whose contents were strewn about as though there had been trouble. Mechanically he replaced purse, comb, compact, bunch of keys, the usual odds and ends. Meanwhile, the door had opened to admit a frenzied man in a pink dressing gown and dancing pumps. It was not Mr. Clyde. Mr. Clyde had red hair; this fool had none at all. Rajah eyed him warily.

"My name is Scattergood, sir, from next door. Are you the new tenant . . . That dog, sir . . . I've complained about it to Mr. Blaustein. Howling and barking at this time of night. Mrs. Scattergood can't get a wink of sleep. Where's Clyde?"

"How would I know?" Dan passed a hand over his damp forehead. "You said Clyde?"

"You're drunk sir," said the indignant Mr. Scattergood. "You don't know anything. You should be ashamed of yourself. You should be locked up. People who live in these

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tin-pot flats . . . Always a menace . . . neighbourhood going to the devil. I won't stand it, I tell you." He rose to a magnificent crescendo. "Carrying on like this . . . women dragged out intoxicated. . . ."

"Women? What women?"

"A few minutes ago. Don't tell me you know nothing about it. I saw it all from my window. Two men putting a woman in a car. One of the men was pretty far gone himself . . . sick in the gutter, sir! A pretty state of things. I'll have a word with Blaustein in the morning, mark my words!"

STILL clutching Nola's handbag, and with Mr. Scattergood's denunciations ringing in his ear like the shriek of doom, Dan Herriot walked out of Cawnpore Square with no clear idea where he was going or what he was going to do when he got there. His principal urge was to get his hands on the affable Barney and his colleague. His ambition was intensified by the well-founded idea that he had been kicked in the ribs after he had fallen.

A curious clicking sounded behind him as he walked, and when he turned to meet this new menace, he found it was merely the rattle of Rajah's claws on the asphalt. They stopped together under a street lamp.

"Go home," Dan said. The dog opened his mouth and yawned. Obviously the fickle-minded animal considered that nothing likely to happen at home would equal the adventures to be encountered in coming with this man, whom he now viewed with both sympathy and affection. Though the state of his head made the exercise risky, Dan bent over and picked up a stone, but when he threw it Rajah merely brought it back to his feet, and when he set off again it was with Rajah trotting at his heels, to Dan's bemused mind the very incarnation of Sirius himself, determined to be present in person at the next disaster on the ample programme.

With a head like a hive of angry bees, Dan was occasionally forced to clutch at fences to maintain the vertical. Nor did any inspiration light the dark corners of his mind until an empty taxi slid into view. He lurched into the roadway and flagged it with a feeble arm. The driver viewed him with the suspicion engendered by a dishevelled man whose progress resembles that of a horse with the blind staggers.

"Where to, bo?"

Where to? Dan couldn't think. Then it occurred to him that someone had better tell Nola's grandfather.

"Brinkman's Bookery."

He gave the driver the address. The man looked at him again and thoughtfully rubbed the stubble on an outsize jowl.

"If I were you, I'd get home. Who wants to buy books at this time of night?"

"I'm not drunk," Dan asserted with indignation. "I've only had a crack on the head."

"If it was a private row," the driver remarked, philosophically, "I'd let bygones be bygones. Maybe it was your best friend that done it. It often happens. Look here, bo, you'd best let me drive you home. I know how it is, but you'll feel different in the morning."

"Who's hiring this cab?"

"Keep your shirt on, bo, keep your shirt on. Brinkman's Bookery it is if you say so." He leaned over and opened the door. Dan found himself sitting on the protesting Rajah, who had climbed in first.

"Who sent *him* here?" demanded the startled driver.

"Sirius?" said Dan dreamily. "He goes along for the ride."

They rolled through a shifting chiaroscuro of dimly lit suburbs, Dan comatose in one corner, Rajah scratching lustily in the other. When they reached Brinkman's Bookery, Dan's head had cleared a little. It still ached, but he felt that he could stand without giddiness, and hit a chin if it loomed up before him. He told the driver to wait and got out. No lights showed in the shop or the dwelling above. While Rajah sniffed at the door, he thumped, but there was no answer.

"Nobody home, bo?" called the driver. "Why worry? A man can get through the rest of the night without reading."

Nola's handbag was in his pocket. There were, Dan remembered, keys in it. He tried a couple, and the door swung back. Rajah pushed through ahead and bounded up the dark stairs as one on familiar ground, while Dan groped amid the smell of mouldering books, and struck matches. He wondered where Brinkman slept and what he would say to him. On the first landing he found Rajah snuffling excitedly at a closed door. Abruptly the dog threw back his head and barked. Inside someone moved.

"That you, Nola?"

It was not Brinkman's voice. Dan waited. A light flashed beneath the door, which opened, and revealed a young man with tousled red hair. The

first sight of him lit a torch in Dan's brain.

"Excuse me," he said, "but would you be Mr. Clyde?"

DAN had rarely seen a more surprised man. The face before him was as startled as a note of interrogation. It stared blankly at him while in another room a drowsy voice complained of the noise.

"Nola! If you must bring that dog here again, keep him quiet."

"That's torn it," said the young man with red hair. "You've wakened the old man. He's not that deaf."

"I came to wake him. Perhaps you'll do as well, if your name's Clyde."

"What if it is?"

"Where's Nola Ashton?"

"I don't know." Clyde retreated a step, intimidated by Dan's grim and dishevelled appearance. He looked worried and anxious. "Why! She should be back. What's the time? Who wants to know?"

"Let's get this straight." Dan reached out and seized him by the collar. "I want to know. I've taken plenty tonight, Clyde."

"Not from me," protested Clyde. "Take your hands away. Who do you think you are?"

"Listen," said Dan. "I've come from your flat in Cawnpore Square. While I was there, Nola came. Then two pals of yours . . ."

Clyde stiffened.

"What pals? Not Barney and Greg. My God!—Here, let me go, damn you! You're choking me."

"Fine," said Dan. "They wanted you badly, but you weren't around, so they laid me out and took Nola away."

Clyde wrenched Dan's hands away. His face went white, though whether with fear or anger, Dan was not prepared to say. He was little more than a boy, and, as Miss Komisski had hinted, by no means ill-looking. Indeed, when he braced himself, as he did now, there was a hint of recklessness about him that Dan recognised and respected.

"Well," he said, "where have they taken her? I want to know. Come through, Clyde, or I'll beat the hell out of you here and now."

"Big talk, but there's no need for it," said Clyde curtly. "I think I know where she is. If I show up, they'll let her go."

"Then you'd better show up."

"I don't get this. Where do you fit in? You've got a name or something, haven't you?"

"Herriot's the name. Dan Herriot. I'm a friend of Nola's."

Clyde's manner underwent a subtle change.

"Herriot! That's different. Why didn't you say so before? She was telling me about you. Herriot, the boxer, isn't it?"

"I didn't tell her that."

"I told myself. I saw you fight in the amateurs when I was a kid. Nola's got plenty of time for you. She says you're all right, and I guess she's a judge. They'll let her go when they see me."

"I'm coming with you to get her."

Clyde shook his head.

"Best not. You don't understand. This is a hell of a jam I'm in, and you'd be better off out of it. They took her to try to get on to me. She'll be safe enough if I get there in time."

"You'll get there. There's a taxi waiting."

"Best keep clear," said Clyde. "Look here, Herriot, I'll make it plainer if you like. I was with Barney when he shot a man in Grieve's Lane to-night. The damned fool! I swear I didn't know he was going to do it, but I was in his car when it happened, and I bolted. If the police get me I may be pulled in as an accessory. If Barney gets me, he'll bump me off, to shut my mouth. That's how things stand. Better keep out.'"

"If it was like that," said Dan indignantly, "why drag Nola in?"

"I asked her to let me hide here for the night. I didn't think anyone would look for me among the old books. She offered to get some clothes for me from my flat, so I could get out in the morning. I wouldn't have let her go if I hadn't thought it would be all right—honest, I wouldn't. She would go — that's her way. She's done her best for me ever since we were kids, and I've given her a lousy break. You may be a straight shooter, Herriot, but you'll be none too straight for Nola. She's been the best sister any man ever had. You wait for her here."

"What about you?"

Clyde shrugged his shouders.

"I'll get by."

He moved towards the stairs, the dog following. Dan came after them.

"You damned young fool."

"Coming?" said Clyde casually. "Well, it's on you now. Don't say I didn't tell you. Here — strikes me you don't look any too good."

He pulled a metal flask from his pocket. Dan drank half of it before he discovered that it was brandy. The air whistled in his lungs, and he felt flame run through his veins.

"I don't suppose you've got a gun?" asked Clyde.

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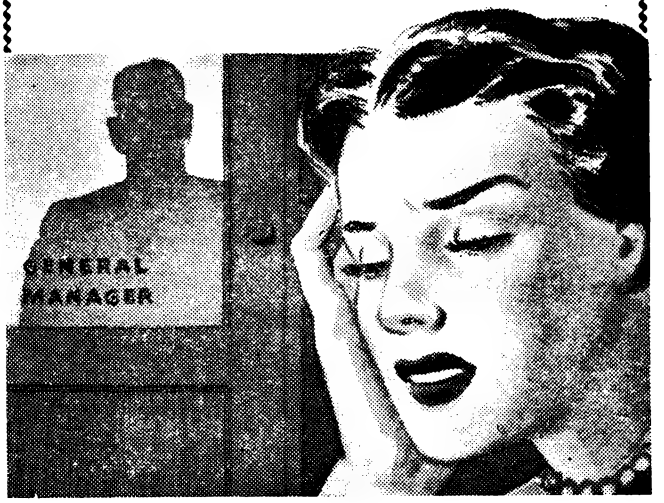

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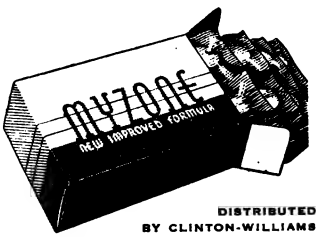

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"Hardly likely. I never thought I'd need one, either."

In the cab, Dan sat relaxed, letting the brandy seep through. The dog sat between them, lunging at them alternately with his long wet tongue. Dan was thinking—so he's Nola's young brother, this young desperado! Yet there was something very likeable about him. Is he a desperado, Dan wondered, or just a kid who's slipped out of top gear?

"Where do we go?" he asked at length.

"I don't know his name. He is the king-pin in a lot of rackets, but they only call him 'the boss' and don't talk names to the people on the outer like me. I've only been to his place once, but we'd better try there first." He paused a moment, and then added, "I'm all sorts of a young swine, aren't I?"

"I'm not a judge. I'm only in this to get Nola out."

"Bad luck she's got a brother like me," said Clyde drily. "That's what you're thinking. But don't let it worry you, Dan. I'll keep clear, whatever happens. I was getting out, anyway, at the end of the week. I got a ticket to the West in my pocket now, and I would have used it, too, only I hung on to get some money out of them. That's why I was giving up the flat. I was finished with all of it, only this turned up."

"Tough," said Dan. "Any use asking how you got into it in the first place."

"It was when they wouldn't take me for the Army. I lost half a foot in an accident as a kid. I was at a loose end, and I worked myself into bother. It was nasty, I admit—someone else's money always is. I got three months through one thing and another, and when I came out nothing broke my way. I even dropped the Ashton off the end of my name, but it didn't help. Then I got in with Barney and their crowd. They work for this fellow they call the boss. All sorts of rackets—black market stuff, and all that—and some unusual ones, too."

"Such as murder," suggested Dan. He felt Clyde shudder. "Why did he shoot Langton?"

"I hardly know what started that," said Clyde. "It seems that Langton had been pretty crook in his time, and someone got on to it and passed the word. The boss kept right in the background about that, and gave Barney the job of putting the hooks in. When Langton got tired of paying blackmail, Barney went along to see him about it. I didn't know there was going to be shooting, or I wouldn't have been there. I didn't think Barney did, either, but he was a bit tight, and Langton said something he didn't like, and that was it. I bolted, pronto, and so would you."

Brakes ground the taxi to a standstill. The driver turned.

"This is the place you want, gents? If I got to do any more waiting, make it as snappy as you can. I got a home and little ones, even if you two bozos ain't."

It was a large old-styled bungalow, red-tiled and respectable, standing in an extensive garden. There were trim lawns and clipped hedges, and the air was heavy with the perfume of roses. Light came from a window at the side, and from the twin tail-lights of a car standing on the driveway just inside the gate. The fires of the first shot of brandy had died down, so Dan lit them afresh with the rest.

"They're here, all right," said Clyde. "That's Barney's car. I wish to God I'd never seen it before in my life. Now, listen, Dan—you know what's doing. You know the company you're in. Better wait right here."

"It's a long time since I took any advice, son. This isn't the time to start again."

"You're in no shape for scrapping."

"I never needed a scrap more. What about the dog? We should have left him."

"Can't stop him now. He's too intelligent to do what I tell him."

Clyde led the way to the rear. Dan marvelled at the coolness. That extra half-foot and what a soldier he would have made! Dan himself was anything but calm. The blood pounded in his ears like surf. But it had always been that way with him before a fight, in the ring or out of it. The gong would steady him. The back door was closed but not locked. As Clyde turned the handle, they heard a faint cry of pain or fear. Clyde swore under his breath. Rajah muttered a low growl.

"Quiet, boy," said his master. "Hold it!"

A thin glimmer of light showed under the door. Voices came from within. One seemed familiar to Dan.

"We don't really want to hurt you, young woman, but it is important to us to know where Mr. Clyde is. You've trifled with us far too long."

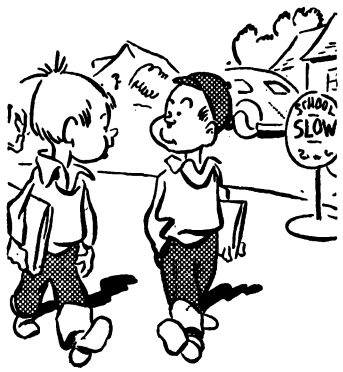
"I don't know where he is."

"Come, come. We're not such fools that we can't guess why you went to his flat with an empty suitcase. He sent you, didn't he?"

"I don't know where he is."

"Another twist, perhaps, Greg."

Again a little cry. The gong rang for Dan, and the surf stopped pounding in his ears. He flung open the door. The room was large and ornate, the furnishings heavily elaborate. The exception was the kitchen chair to which Nola Ashton was tied. She faced the door. Behind her stood Greg, holding her arm high. In front was a tallish man in a velvet smoking jacket, his grey hair rakishly crowned with a little tasselled cap of the same exotic material. On a sofa reclined Barney, sick and green. He looked, Dan was glad to see, like a man who has been punched in the stomach and stayed punched. Everywhere were roses in bowls. Clyde picked up one of heavy porcelain and weighed it thoughtfully in his hand.



"I was always pretty good at arithmetic until we got to addition and subtraction."

"Hell!" said Greg. Nola's eyes opened wide, and her lips parted, though no word came. The man in the velvet jacket turned, peering at Dan through old-fashioned steel-rimmed glasses.

"I can't say I like the look of this, Mr. Jarvis," said Dan.

MR. JARVIS leaned heavily against the chair to which Nola was tied. His benignity had gone, he looked ill and old and very venomous. A greenish pallor spread over his face, and he clutched at his throat. Barney jumped up, a hand thrust into his pocket. Mr. Jarvis made a fluttering gesture.

"No, Barney . . ." His voice was pleading and tremulous. "For God's sake, Barney . . ."

Clyde flung the rosebowl. It flew beneath the light, showering drops of water like diamonds, and shattered with a crash against Barney's revolver, which fell in a rain of red and white petals.

Barney dived for the gun, while Rajah dived for his hand and got there first. Barney rolled across the floor, squealing and beating at the dog's head. The gun still lacked an owner. Greg went for it, but Dan met him halfway. It was a sitter, a birthday gift. It started in the muscles in Dan's legs and finished with a splintering crash on Greg's jaw. Greg hit the wall and slid slowly to the floor. He looked like another man. Dan regarded him with interest, thinking what a difference it makes when one's chin is under the left ear. In Greg's case it was almost an improvement.

"I owed you that, damn you," he said, though without heat, and picked up the gun. He released Nola and laid her on the sofa. There is a psychological moment to start calling a girl "darling," and this seemed to be it. When he turned to examine the position he discovered that the dog had ceased to worry Barney and appeared to be on the point of taking him out and burying him.

Mr. Jarvis sat with his face in his hands. He looked as though his twin lives had overwhelmed him in a landslide of years.

"Phone the police, Clyde," said Dan. "Someone must clean up this mess!"

"One moment," put in Mr. Jarvis. "I warn you, Clyde . . ."

"He'll tell a straight story, Jarvis," said Dan. "He'll be all right."

Clyde crossed the room and lifted the receiver.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear," moaned Mr. Jarvis. "At my age . . . Mr. Herriot, I beg of you . . . I can explain everything . . ."

IT was nearly a week before Dan showed up at the office again. He would willingly have foregone that pleasure, but someone had to take charge. Miss Komisski arrived later, not, as she frankly admitted, to do any work, but to consult *Astrology For You*. She riffled through the pages of that classic and stopped, pop-eyed.

"Gee, Mr. Herriot, I can't understand why I made such a stupid mistake. You remember me telling you that last Friday was under the influence of Sirius? I was looking at the wrong date! It says here that Venus was in the ascendant. What do you know about that?"

At four o'clock she returned with afternoon tea. As usual, she had tripped over something, spilling the tea into the saucer and ruining the biscuits. At five o'clock, to take things in chronological order, Dan Herriot went out to meet Nola . . . ●

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Father and I Were Ranchers

(Continued from page 16)

asking him if he wouldn't have some more of everything. Every time she asked him he would pass his plate back and Father would scrape around some more. I knew he was keeping one drumstick back for Two Dog, because he had only fished one out, and Philip got that.

When everything in sight was gone, Mr. Thompson tilted his chair back on its hind legs and wiped his whiskers with the corner of the tablecloth. Then he began telling us about the time he first made his camp right where we were sitting. I liked to hear him talk, but I was worried about Two Dog's supper, and asked Father if I could take it out to him. Father dished it up and Mother got me three biscuits and some mashed potatoes she'd been keeping hot on the stove.

I put the silverware and napkin in my overall pocket, so I'd have one hand for the plate and the other for the teacup. Two Dog hadn't moved an inch. He was still looking out across the bean field, but when I passed the plate out to him he looked up and his eyes smiled, but not his mouth. He took the plate with both hands and sat it down beside him, then reached them up for the cup. Instead of holding it by the handle, he took it like a bowl and tasted the tea. Then he looked up at me and said, "Shoog," but I didn't understand what he meant till he put one finger up above the cup and moved it around as if he were stirring.

I forgot all about his silverware and napkin, and ran to the house for the sugar-bowl. When I got back he was still holding the cup like a squirrel holding an acorn, and looking across the bean field. There was about a cup of sugar in the bowl. He poured nearly a third of it into the tea and started to stir it with his fingers as soon as he had put the bowl down. Then I remembered the silverware and held it out to him. He looked at it a minute and then stirred the tea again with his finger. I didn't want to leave him and I didn't want to just stand there holding the napkin and silver, so I sat down beside him.

He finished all the tea first, then ate just the chicken leg off the plate. When it was gone, he took up the sugar-bowl and poured a few grains into his cupped hand. He picked it out of his palm with his lips, like a horse picking the last few oats out of his feedbox. I don't know how long we sat there, but it was until long after the sun had gone down. Every ten or fifteen minutes Two Dog would pour a few more grains of sugar into his palm and pick it out with his lips. They were so dry they never made his hand sticky. He didn't say a word till the bowl was empty, and I didn't either. Once he put his hand over and let it drop on my knee; he lifted it slowly and let it drop twice more. When the bowl was empty he passed it to me and said, "Friend." That was all the conversation. I got up and went to the house with a lump in my throat and a big love in my heart for Two Dog.

When I came into the house, the supper dishes were done and all the children in bed, except Grace. Mother had the corn popper out and was popping corn over a hot fire, Mr. Thompson was still tilted back in his chair, but had swung it around and had his feet crossed on the window-sill. He and Father were munching popcorn, but Grace was sitting with her eyes bugged out, and not even nibbling at the handful of popcorn she was holding. I sat down beside her and she leaned over close to my ear and whispered, "Oh, can he tell stories! He used to go hunting and fighting Indians with Kit Carson."

Mother had never let us sit up so late as we did that evening, and I had never seen anybody eat so much popcorn. Mr. Thompson seemed to have known every trapper and hunter who came west for beaver and buffalo skins. Between mouthfuls of popcorn, he told us about guiding wagon trains from Westport Landing to Oregon, and about going to rendezvous on the Green River with Kit Carson and Bent and Lucien Maxwell. Every once in a while he would stop and tell Mother that he hadn't had such a fine evening since he was a little boy in Missouri. Then he would eat more popcorn, and start all over again.

His last story was about a fight with the Blackfoot Indians. He told how the Indians set fire to the prairie clear around their wagon camp, and about his being the only white man to get out alive. The only reason he didn't get killed was that Two Dog was a chief's son. Mr. Thompson pulled him out from under his dead horse just before the fire reached him, and two young braves rode in through the flames to save them. He said that was why he and Two Dog were blood brothers. I didn't know what that meant, so he told me how they had cut themselves and placed the wounds against each other, so their blood would mix and make them brothers for ever.

After that Mother made Grace and me get ready for bed. But while we were brushing our teeth, Mr. Thompson kept on telling Father about Two Dog. He said, "Old Two Dog, he's the cleverest man with horses ever you see. That old Injun, he can take a horse critter that's nine parts dead, and have him prancin' round like a colt in a couple days. And there ain't no horse so mean he can't handle him." I wanted to stay and hear more, but Father snapped his fingers.

I couldn't have gone to sleep when I got out to the bunkhouse if I'd wanted to, and I didn't want to. I thought maybe Mr. Thompson would tell another story when he came out to go to bed, or that when he was putting his nightshirt on I might be able to see some of the places where he had been shot. He came out just a little while after I was in bed, but all he said was, "Whoosh." And all he took off was his calfskin vest and his high-heeled boots, then he crawled in between the blankets with everything else on. I asked him if he wanted me to go out and call Two Dog to come to bed, but he said, "Old Two Dog, he ain't never slept in no house; he'd rather sleep right where

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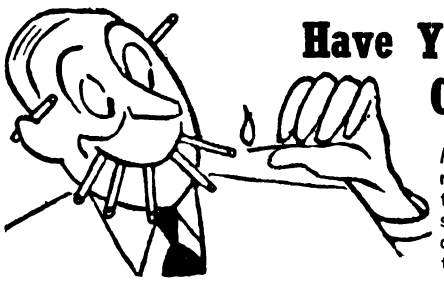

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he's at." In two minutes he was snoring so loud I couldn't go to sleep.

EVEN if it was June, it was cold at night, and I got thinking about Two Dog sitting out there beside the barn. After a little while, when I knew Grace would be asleep, I pulled my overalls on and took the top blanket off our bed. I didn't make enough noise so I could even hear myself above Mr. Thompson's snoring, and was holding my breath as I eased the door open, but he sat bolt upright when I touched the latch, and said, "Who goes there?" I told him and said I was just taking a blanket out to Two Dog. He was snoring again before I closed the door.

When I got to the barn Two Dog was sitting exactly the way he was when I left him. The moon was way over in the west, above the mountains, and I could see that his eyes were open and that he was still looking off across the bean field. I held the blanket out towards him and he reached up for it. With a quick flip, he flung it around his shoulders so that it covered all but his head like a tent. He didn't say a word and I didn't want to just walk away and leave him, so I sat down beside him again. I guess I sat down by him because I was thinking about Mr. Thompson's story, and wished I could be a blood brother to Two Dog as he was. He didn't look over at me, but he flipped the blanket around me so we were both under the same tent.

Grandfather used to be deaf and, before he died, he and I used to play sign language. I thought maybe I could talk to Two Dog in sign language, so I raised my eyebrows, put both palms together and laid my face down against them; then I looked far off along the mountains. Two Dog knew I was asking him where he slept—where his home was—just as well as Grandfather would have known. He pointed with a straight arm and finger towards the V-shaped gap where Turkey Creek came out of the mountains. Then, using his forefingers to follow the trail forward and upward, he told me where his camp was, high in the upland valley.

Two Dog and I sat and talked with our hands till the moon dipped down and started to slide away behind the mountains. Then he reached over and laid his hand against my leg in three slow strokes the way he did when I brought his supper. I knew he meant for me to go in to bed, so I went. But I stayed awake a long time thinking about the stories he had told me with his hands. When Father called me in the morning, Mr. Thompson and Two Dog were gone.

MRS. CORCORAN came to the corral when I went to take the cows out the next morning. She hadn't combed her hair and had her hands rolled up in her apron because it was still a little chilly. She called, "Little boy!" before she was half-way across the dooryard, and from the way she had her mouth clamped up I thought she was going to scold me. But when she got over to where I was waiting to let the cows out of the gate, she said, "I hear tell that old reprobate, Horsethief Thompson, and his Injun put up at your place last night. Good lands! I hope your folks had better sense than to let 'em in the house. Did they?"

I told her that Two Dog wouldn't even come into the house for supper and that he slept sitting out beside the barn. She snorted like a spooky horse when I told her that, and said, "Then you're telling me your maw did let old Horsethief in? My land o' Goshen! Well, you better tell her they'll steal anything that ain't red-hot and nailed down. I hear tell that dirty old man's got more lice on him than a settin' hen. I suppose your folks didn't have no better sense than to sit around with their mouths a-gap listening to a pack of his lies."

I got so mad when she said that, that I forgot she was my boss, and hollered, "My folks have got more sense than you have, and he did not tell us a pack of lies. He told us about Kit Carson, and I know it isn't lies, because I read about Kit Carson in a book. And besides, he isn't a dirty old man."

I kept getting madder and madder at Mrs. Corcoran for what she said, until the lump got so big in my throat that I thought I was going to cry. So to keep from it, I slammed the gate open and ran Fanny right in among the cows. Until I had them nearly out to the wagon road, Mrs. Corcoran kept yelling after me, telling me that if she had a "sassy young one" like me she'd take him across her checkered apron, and saying more mean things about Mr. Thompson and Two Dog.

When I went past Aultlands' for the milk that night, Fred told me he was going to start stacking alfalfa the next day and that Father was going to help him. Then he asked me how much Mrs. Corcoran was paying me for herding cows. When I told him, he said, "I'll double the ante if you want to ride stacker horse for me."

I didn't know what he meant, but I told him I'd do it, so he had me go back and tell Mrs. Corcoran I wouldn't be coming to herd her cows till haying was over. From her telling me she'd take me over her checkered apron if I was her young one, I didn't think she'd care if I never came back, but she just about had a fit. She asked me how much Fred was going to pay me, and I said I didn't know but he had said he'd double the ante. When I told her that she got madder than ever and called him a help stealer, and said he was ruining me so I wouldn't be any good to anybody. Then she told me she never wanted to lay eyes on me again. But when I was riding back to the road, she yelled for me to be sure and come back the day after Fred got done haying.

I didn't want to tell Mother what Mrs. Corcoran said about Mr. Thompson and Two Dog, because I knew if I did she'd get around to where I'd have to tell her that I'd been saucy. But I was worried that some of it might be true, and besides I didn't want to have any question in my own mind about either Two Dog or Mr. Thompson, so I told Father all about it while we were out feeding the horses.

Father said that, of course, you never could tell by the looks of a frog how far he'd jump, but he'd bet that neither Mr. Thompson nor Two Dog would ever steal anything from us, and that he thought Mr. Thompson was telling the truth in his story. Then he said Mother could get books

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in the Denver Library that would show whether or not Kit Carson did the things Mr. Thompson said he did, and if he did then we would know the stories were true. He said maybe the part about the lice was right, but it might be best not to mention it to Mother till we knew more about it.

HAYING

I LIKED working for Fred Aultland. Haying and threshing were big times at his place, and he always had a dozen or so men to help him. Some of them were neighbours who didn't have so much hay of their own, and some were hired hands Fred brought out from Denver. Father and I didn't work for him until the hay was all cut and raked into windrows. I had never seen a hay stacker before, and Father had to snap his fingers at me twice during the morning, because I got so interested in what was going on that I forgot about my own job. Fred's was what they called a bull-stacker and the hay was brought in from the fields with bull-rakes.

They were sort of three-wheeled carts, and always looked as though they were going backwards, because they scooped up the hay and carried it to the stacker in front of the horses, instead of behind them. Each load weighed nearly half a ton.

The stacker looked like the mast of a ship mounted on a big turntable, with a long boom fastened near the bottom of it. The cradle was hinged to the end of the boom, and pulley ropes ran between it and the top of the mast. Jeff was the engine that furnished the lifting power, and I was the engineer. Jeff was a big, lazy old horse —strong as a pair of oxen— and had been pulling the hoist rope for the past five years. As Jeff pulled on the rope, the hay was raised from the bull-rakes and lifted nearly to the top of the mast. Then, while we held it there, Father and another man heaved the turntable around with a long gee-pole, till the cradle was over the stack. When I backed Jeff to slacken the hoist rope, the cradle tilted forward and the load fell with a thump. It took Fred and two other men to get it untangled and built into the stack before another load was brought in. The only hard part of Father's job was heaving the turntable around, but that made him cough a good deal.

After the first couple of loads, he talked to Fred about the stacker, and they sent a man to the barn for tools and other things Father needed. He worked, between loads, all morning; changing pulleys, rigging a heavy cable from the turntable to the hoist rope, and putting trip-catches on the cradle. When he was finished, they didn't need to heave the turntable around any more, nor lift the hay any higher than the top of the stack, and Father could drop the hay wherever Fred wanted it, by just jerking a trip-cord. In that way Fred needed only one man to help him on the stack, and Father could do all the work on the ground alone.

I liked noontimes best of any part of the haying. When it came twelve o'clock, Bessie would hammer on an old wagon tyre hung near the kitchen door. The sound would roll out across the hayfields like the ringing of a big bell, and after it had stopped, the echo would come back from the hills as though they were full of far-off churches.

The minute the bell rang the drivers would stop their teams wherever they happened to be and unhook the horses. It was always a race to see who could get his team to the barn quickest, so as to get them unbridled and fed, and be first at the washstand. It was out by the windmill, and Bessie always had three blue enamel basins, half a dozen flour-sack towels, and a bar of home-made yellow soap waiting for us.

Aultlands' had a big porch on the east side of their house, with a row of apple trees that shaded it. In haying and threshing time, Bessie set a long table out there, and that's where we ate our dinners.

As soon as we were down at the table, Bessie would start bringing out big platters of meat and fried chicken, and potatoes and vegetables, and bowls of gravy, and plates of hot biscuits and corn muffins. As quick as she'd set a platter down, somebody would pick it up, help himself, and pass it on to the next man. They came so fast that I could hardly help myself from one before another one caught up to me. Some of the platters were still pretty heavy when they got to me, and I could just barely hold them with one hand while I forked some off with the other. At first the men wanted to hold them for me, but they saw I didn't like them to, and let me handle my own platters. Mrs. Aultland was a real good cook, and I used to eat until I couldn't hold another mouthful.

The most fun came after we were done eating. We had to take an hour for dinner because the horses needed that much time to eat and rest. So, as soon as the last piece of pie was eaten, the men would lie down on the grass under the apple trees. Father didn't smoke, but all the other men would get out their pipes or roll cigarettes, and talk or tell stories while they were smoking. Jerry Alder was the best story-teller. Sometimes he told stories so quiet I could hardly hear them, and they didn't sound funny at all, but all the men would laugh till the fat ones had to hold on to their stomachs. Even Father laughed sometimes when I couldn't see anything funny.

Fred Aultland's haying lasted two weeks — Sundays and all. I remember the last day of that haying better than any of the others, because so many things happened. The last day of haying or harvest or threshing is always the day when the most things happen. Maybe it's because everybody is happy if you had good luck, and if you didn't everybody's glad it's over with.

There was a fight after dinner that noon. One of the young fellows Fred brought out from Denver said something about Bessie that Jerry Alder didn't like. It was an awful hard fight. The Denver fellow was the biggest man on the job, and Jerry was next biggest. The first sock Jerry hit him, Bessie ran into the house and all the men got up on their feet, but nobody tried to stop them.

The other two Denver fellows were nearest to where they were fighting. Fred and Carl Henry went over and stood by them, but they didn't say anything. The big Denver man didn't hit so often as Jerry did, but he hit a lot harder. He took a longer swing and once he hit Jerry under the ear and knocked him down. I thought he was going to kick him while he was down, but Fred stepped

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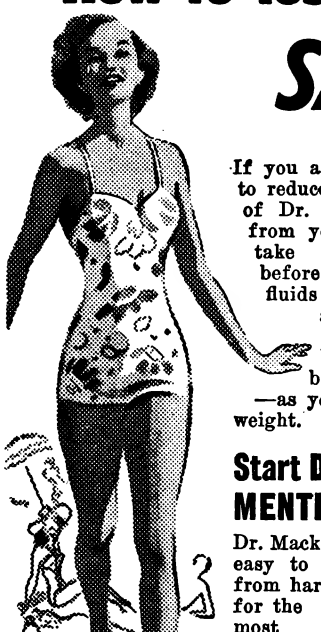

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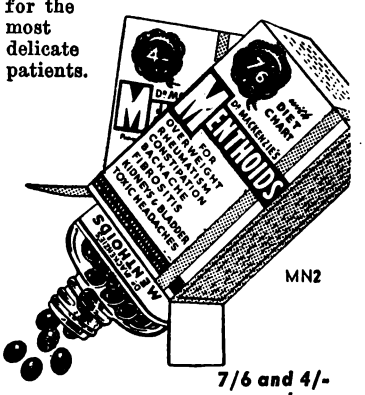

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in quick, and he didn't. Jerry rolled over and got right up again, and from there on he fought just like a collie dog.

He used his feet just about as much as he did his fists, but he didn't do any kicking like the other fellow. He'd go in quick and hit, and be out again before the bigger fellow could hit back. And he went around that Denver man like a fly going around a lamp-chimney. I guess the big fellow got kind of dizzy turning round and round, trying to catch up with Jerry, because he started looking pretty groggy. Then, all at once, Jerry flew in with both arms working like the Pitman rod on a mowing machine. He got his head right against the other fellow's wishbone, and hammered him in the stomach till he went down yawping for air like a mud cat when you toss him up on the creek bank.

After the fight, Fred took the three Denver fellows over to the bunkhouse and paid them off, but I don't think he ever said anything at all to Jerry for fighting. And as soon as he had washed the blood off his face and got his breath, you wouldn't have known Jerry had been in a fight—except that his lips were kind of swelled up.

With three hands short, it was late before we had the last load of hay on the stack, so Father and I stayed at Aultlands' for supper. When we were through eating, Fred told us to come into the house with him. We sat down by the table in the dniing-room, and Fred got out his cheque-book. I knew Father didn't know how much he was going to get, because I heard Mother ask him, and he just said, "I don't know. I think he's paying the men he got from Denver a dollar and a half a day, but they're quite a bit stouter than I am right now." I hadn't wanted to ask Father what Fred meant when he told me he'd double the ante, so I didn't know how much I was going to get, either, but I hoped he meant he was going to give me fifty cents a day.

After Fred got the ink bottle and a pen, he sat down at the table with us and asked me if I wanted to have a separate cheque, or if he should make one cheque for Father and me together. I wanted it to be a big enough cheque that we could buy a cow, and I was proud to have my pay go in with Father's, so I said for him to just make one cheque. He looked up at Father, and said, "All right then, Charlie, that'll make it a round sum. I figure Spikes is worth twice what Jim Corcoran was giving him, and you've saved me the wages of two men. Will fifty dollars square the books?" I was so excited I didn't even hear what Father said, and he had to tap me on the arm before I remembered to say thank you.

Father was as anxious to get home and show Mother the cheque as I was. He walked so fast I had to trot part of the time to keep up with him. We hadn't gone very far before he noticed I was having to trot, and scrooched down so I could get on and ride pickaback. I had always liked to have Father lug me pickaback before—and we were far enough from Aultlands' house so that I wasn't afraid anyone would see us—but for some reason I didn't want to be carried that night. It just didn't seem right to be carried home when we were taking the cheque I had helped earn. Father understood how I felt, and he walked slow enough so I didn't have to trot any more, and let me carry the cheque home to Mother in my overall pocket.

There wasn't nearly so much fun in giving it to her as I had thought, because when we got there our old white horse, Bill, was sick. He was breathing so hard you could hear him all over the yard, and was pounding his head on the barn floor. Father took one look at him and said, "Blackwater. I'm afraid he's done for." Then he sent me kiting back to Aultlands' for a bottle of spirits of nitre.

I GO AFTER TWO DOG

THE next morning I was up as soon as the first light peeped over Loretta Heights. Mrs. Corcoran had told me to come back to herd her cows right after haying, but I had a different idea in my head. Bill was still just barely alive and I was going to get Two Dog to come and save him. Before anybody else was up, I went out and sat beside our barn where we had sat the night he and Mr. Thompson stayed at our place.

From there I could get the best look at the mountains when the sun first struck them, and before it got high enough to light the land between them and me. I could see just how Two Dog's fingers had shown me the way to his camp, and trace the trail up through Turkey Creek Canyon so it seemed almost as though I had actually been over it. By half-past six I started off up the road on Fanny as if I were going to the Corcorans', but I had three cold biscuits hidden in the front of my blouse.

All spring Father had talked about driving up to the mountains some Sunday, but for one reason or another we never did it. But I knew Father would never let me go alone, and I didn't want anybody to see me, so I headed west past Aultlands' wheat field, then cut south-west across country, straight for the V that marked the mouth of the canyon. We went up over Fred's big hill like a jack rabbit in front of a coyote.

Looking from the top of that hill, I could see a series of others, rising one beyond the other toward the hogbacks that stood before the real mountains. Until then there hadn't been any doubt in my mind that I could get to Two Dog's camp without a mite of trouble. But I was just as sure that Two Dog was the only one in the world who could save Bill, so I kicked my heels against Fanny's ribs.

At first there were crops in the valleys between the hills, and a few ranch-houses, so I had to ride miles out of my way to get around them. Every time we got to the top of one hill, there was another just beyond it, and the mountains didn't seem any nearer than they had from home. I knew Fanny was beginning to get tired, because the hills were getting steeper and she was climbing slower. There were no more crop fields in the valleys, and I started riding around the hills instead of over them, so as to save Fanny the hard climbs. Two or three times we came to deep gulches that we couldn't get across, and had to turn back and find another way. If it hadn't been for the mountains I'm sure I would have been lost, but I knew their shapes well enough so that I could always tell where I was. It was getting close to noon and the sun was bearing down like a hot stove lid when we came into a green little valley with a spring of cool water in it. We both drank all we could hold, and while Fanny grazed I ate my biscuits. I must have squeezed them a bit, because they were pretty well crumbled up, and some of the pieces were soggy with sweat, but I was hungry and they tasted all right.

The sun was hanging low above the mountains when we came over the last hill and I could see the break in the hogback where Turkey Creek had cut its gorge. As we came closer I could see there was a little-used wagon road along the north bank of the creek. I loped Fanny towards it and we followed it through the gorge and into the mouth of the canyon. The misgivings I had when we were on top of Fred Aultland's hill were nothing to what I had when we came into the canyon. The creek ran through a narrow cut, and the walls seemed to rise straight up for a mile. From there, the sun had set and a cool breeze was drawing down between the cliffs. All I had on was my blue shirt

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and overalls, and after the heat among the hills, it made me shiver. I don't know whether I shivered more because I was cold or because I was frightened. I had never seen mountains that were more than big rolling hills, and it seemed to me that those black rock walls might fall on me any minute.

Then I really began to be afraid I could never find Two Dog's camp. I stopped Fanny and shut my eyes tight, trying to bring back the way he had pointed out the trail with his fingers, but all I could see was a big green blotch with black rock walls running up around it. As I had sat beside the barn with Two Dog a couple of weeks ago, and again that same morning, I had been able to picture the trail just as I was sure it was going to look, but it was all different now. For a minute or two I was going to turn back, but I knew night would come long before I could make it, and I could never hope to find my way home in the dark. I kicked my heels into Fanny's ribs and we went on. The harder I tried to think how Two Dog's fingers had moved, the more confused I got.

In half an hour it had become darker and colder in the canyon. I could remember that Two Dog's fingers had shown the trail going in quite away before it branched off, but he had made them go straight, while the trail wound in and out against the wall of the canyon. At last I thought that if I could just be sitting down behind our barn again for a few minutes I could remember it all right. But, of course, I couldn't do that, so I slid off Fanny and sat down with my back against the canyon wall. I was so tired I almost went to sleep, and it must have been when I was just between being asleep and awake that it all came back to me. I could remember that he had shown the trail going up, as though there was a steep hill, and then angling off to the right. I climbed back on Fanny and put her into a good stiff lope. It wasn't more than ten minutes before we came around a shoulder of rock and the track climbed steeply up a shelf on the canyon wall.

Just above the rise the trail forked. The main track followed the shelf above the creek, but a thin thread of it turned up the side of a jagged cleft through the rocks to the right. I had no question in mind, and turned Fanny up the steep side trail. The sun had sunk so low that it no longer shone on the top of the peaks above me, and I began to get panicky for fear black darkness would catch me and we would fall to the bottom of the gorge if Fanny made a mis-step. I dug my knees into her withers and kept her climbing so hard that it made her breath whistle through her nose.

We were nearly at the top of the climb when the whole air of the canyon was ripped to pieces by a sound that almost made my heart stop. It was a howl that seemed to come from nowhere in particular, but from everywhere at once, as it echoed back and forth between the canyon walls. Cold shivers raced up and down my back and it felt as though it were covered with stiff hair that was standing up as it does on a frightened dog. Fanny must have felt just the same way I did, because her ears pinned back tight against her head, and I could feel a tremble pass through her withers. She crowded close against the cliff and stood shaking.

I started thinking about Father and Mother and the rest of the youngsters at home. I wanted to turn Fanny and race out of the canyon as fast as she could go, but when I looked down into the gorge it was as black as a well. Though I had never heard a wolf's howl before, I had read about it and knew that was what I must have heard. I tried to remember the sound and see if I could figure out whether it came from above or below, but I was so scared I couldn't think straight, and when I shut my eyes I could see grey shadows racing up the trail behind me. That settled it. I kicked my heels into Fanny's ribs and tried to cluck to her, but my mouth was so dry that I only made a hissing sound.

I think that was the first time Fanny ever trusted my judgment more than her own. She gathered her muscles and tore up the rest of the grade as though the wolf had her by the tail. We came out on to a flat rock ledge, raced across it, and were out on to a narrow path that wound through great boulders. Fanny was taking the sharp turns of the path so fast that I had to hang on with every ounce of strength in my knees. We must have gone a mile or more that way—I could hear every breath she took rasp through her throat like tearing cloth. It was deep twilight when we came out into a little open field set in between tall black-looking trees — and the path was gone. I sawed on the reins and pulled Fanny to a stop in the middle of the field. We stood shivering as though it were below zero. There wasn't a sound except the rushing of Fanny's breath. The first thought that came into my head was—*timber wolves.* I had read stories about their tearing wood choppers to pieces, and turned Fanny to get back out of there the way we had come in. But I couldn't even see a gap in the wall of black trees, and I was so panicky I couldn't remember whether there should be more to the trail or not.

Without even thinking what I was doing, I yelled, "*Two Dog!*" at the top of my lungs. The sound came yodelly like a coyote call. A second later an oblong of light from an open doorway showed at the edge of the woods, and Mr. Thompson's voice called out, "Hi there, Little Papoose."

MOTHER used to sing a song about "the golden gates of heaven," and that's what the yellow light coming out of the doorway reminded me of. I leaned forward a little bit on Fanny and she went over there on the fly. I guess that light looked as good to her as it did to me.

When I rode up to the door, Mr. Thompson told me to light down and come in while he put Fanny in the corral. At first I didn't want to let him take her and asked if the wolves might not get her, but he just laughed and said, "Ain't saw a wolf 'round these parts in years—'ceptin' Two Dog's old tame one. Always hollers when there's anybody on the trail, and generally scares 'em off. That's how we knowed you was comin'."

Their house only had one small room and not a single window. It was made of poles on the front and sides, and built right against a ledge, so that the back wall was solid stone. The spaces between the poles were stuffed with hard-baked adobe and straw. There wasn't any stove or chimney, but there was a cleft in the ledge about three feet deep that they used for a fireplace. It was wedge-shaped, and about as wide as it was deep at the bottom, but the top narrowed to less than a foot. The floor was partly a flat rock and the rest hard dirt. There were two bunks at one end of the room—one above the other—but there weren't any bedclothes or mattresses. The springs were made of tightly stretched horsehide, and the covers were mountain-goat skins with long white hair.

The only furniture was a table and two stools. The table must have weighed a ton. It was nearly four feet wide, and had been made by splitting the butt of a log in two. The legs were heavy stakes driven into holes in the round side of the log. One stool sat on each side of the table. They were made the same way, and didn't look as though they had ever been moved. Pieces of wagon iron, worn horseshoes, and harness hung on wooden pegs in the walls. Strips of dried meat and bunches of herbs were tied to a line in front of the fireplace. The only lamp was a bottle of fat with a rope wick in it. It didn't have any chimney.

Two Dog was sitting on the floor beside the fireplace with his back against the stone

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wall. He didn't get up when I came in, but his eyes lighted and he held one arm towards me with the palm of his hand down. I didn't know how to shake hands with his palm turned down like that, so I just took hold of the ends of his fingers, then let go and sat down beside him. He didn't say a word, but reached over and laid his hand on my leg three times, the way he did beside our barn. It was five or ten minutes before Mr. Thompson came back from putting Fanny in the corral. I had plenty of time to show Two Dog how Bill was lying on our barn floor with his back all humped up. And how he was pounding his head, and how he was breathing.

I used to wonder if the reason Two Dog didn't talk wasn't because Mr. Thompson talked enough for both of them. As soon as he came back from putting Fanny in the corral, Two Dog said about six words to him—kind of grunts, I guess it was Indian. Then Mr. Thompson began asking me questions faster than I could answer them. He wanted to know if Father and Mother knew I was coming up there, and how I had found their place, and if my folks wouldn't be worried about me. All the time he was talking he kept fussing with something in a big black iron pot over the fire.

While I was telling him, he took three dented old pie-tins from the table and started ladling out the stew. It looked like rabbit stew, but the gravy was thick and brown. There was a covered iron kettle sitting on the floor by the fireplace. Mr. Thompson fished a few cold biscuits and three iron spoons out of it, put a biscuit and a spoon on each plate, and gave one to Two Dog and one to me. Then he sat down on a stool with his plate beside him on the table.

Mr. Thompson kept asking questions all the time between mouthfuls, and telling me to hurry and eat my victuals so he could take me right home. I was real hungry and the stew was good, so I just let him talk till I had cleaned up my plate. Just as I was sopping up the last of the gravy with my biscuit, Two Dog patted me on the leg again, nodded his head towards his plate, and said, "Skunk—good!" For a minute I thought I was going to be sick, but I decided it wouldn't hurt me if it didn't hurt them, and it stayed down all right.

As soon as Mr. Thompson was through eating, he snatched up the stew pot and took it outdoors. I heard him clapping his hands before he came back. Two Dog got up, took a coil of thin shiny rope from a peg in the wall, and motioned for me to follow him out the door. As I did, my heart jumped into my throat and nearly stopped. A big grey wolf was eating from the iron pot. He was standing in the light that spilled through the doorway, and when he lifted his head his eyes glowed like live coals. He snarled, and the hair bristled on his shoulders, but Two Dog grunted at him and he faded away into the shadow of the trees.

The moon had risen, and Two Dog led the way along the woods at the edge of the field to a pole corral at its far end. There was a break in the trees, so that moonlight flooded the corral, and I could see nearly a dozen mean-looking horses inside it. Fanny and the two buckskins I had seen at our place were among them. They started milling when they saw us, and crowded into the far end of the corral, snorting and rearing against the poles. Two Dog motioned me to stay outside, while he crawled through the bars.

He seemed so frail and old that I was sure they would kill him, but he walked straight towards them. As he went, he shook out a loop in the horsehair rope, holding it in one hand and letting it trail along behind him. He was almost to them when one of the horses whistled, and they all came racing towards him. I ducked my head without meaning to, and when I lifted it Two Dog was snubbing one of the buckskins to a corral post. The buckskin jumped and reared, fighting the rope for a couple of minutes, but it didn't seem to worry Two Dog a bit. He waited for the bronc to calm down, then led him to the gate and haltered him.

I watched like a hawk when he caught the other buckskin, but I couldn't see how he did it. He didn't any more than snap his wrist and forearm, but the rope leaped off the ground, passed over another horse's back, and came looping down around the buckskin's neck. It all happened in less than a second. After that, he caught Fanny the same way, only he didn't have to snub her to a post. As soon as she felt the rope around her neck she stopped dead still. Two Dog snapped his wrist again and a loop that looked like a little barrel hoop ran up the rope and settled around her nose. Then he led her to the gate and put her bridle on.

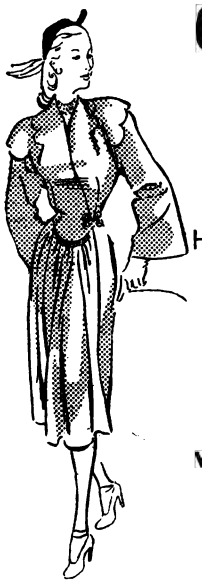
I started to climb up the poles to get on her, but Two Dog shook his head at me. There was a rawhide strap about an inch wide hanging on one of the corral poles. He cut a piece off it a little more than a foot long, sliced about half its length into three narrow strips, and braided them into Fanny's mane, way back close to her withers. Then he showed me how to grab it with one hand and swing myself up so I could get an arm over her back. From there it was easy to pull myself on, and Fanny wore the rawhide braided in her mane as long as she lived.

Two Dog led the horses to the house, and when Mr. Thompson came out with the harness he was all dressed up in his calf-skin vest, ten-gallon hat, and high-heeled boots. While he harnessed the horses, Two Dog went in and put on his black coat and derby. When he came back he was holding a small leather pouch that rattled as if it had dry leaves in it.

I don't remember much about the trip home that night. One minute I was listening to the drumbeat of the buckskin's running hoofs, and what seemed to be the next, Mr. Thompson was passing me over the wagon wheel into mother's arms, and she was crying. I was awfully sleepy and I just remember having my head against her neck and telling her I was sorry, as she was carrying me through the bunkhouse door.

It was pretty late when father came and woke me. He sat on the edge of my bed and held me on his lap. Then he told me how wrong a thing I had done, and that it had frightened mother so that he wouldn't be surprised if it took several years off her life. He said that every man in the neighbourhood had been out riding the hills looking for me, and that he thought mother would have lost her mind if he hadn't made her believe Fanny would have come home alone if anything had happened to me. Then he said that wasn't really so, because she might have broken a leg in a gopher hole and fallen on me. I don't remember father ever kissing me any other time, but after he put me back in bed he leaned over and kissed me right on the forehead. I didn't wake up till late the next morning. When I did, Mr. Thompson and Two Dog were gone, and Bill was up on his feet, nibbling at a few wisps of alfalfa. ●

NEXT MONTH:
Ralph goes to an auction sale, and Father leads a fight over water-rights.



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A.J.1/7/52

Born to be Bullied

By MARY SCOTT

Some women are born to be bullied, but it's not so bad if the right man does the bullying.

THE baby whimpered fretfully, and Linda Brett made a tiny soothing noise. She didn't know that she'd made any sound at all, but the young couple whose child it was glanced impatiently at her, and the tall man with the sun-browned face smiled kindly.

This little woman — no longer young, never, perhaps, very beautiful — interested him. Her soft wavy hair was touched lightly, faintly, with white flecks, but her eyes were surprisingly blue and young. He liked the way she kept looking at the baby, and the way her hand went out quite involuntarily when it cried. You could see she was the old-fashioned type that loved children.

The guide was still talking. The sort, thought James, to talk through a blitz; probably had done so without turning a hair. His ears ceased to hear the story of Westminster Abbey, and he fell to speculating idly about his fellow sightseers, the strangely detached pair with the baby, the little woman who listened so eagerly to the guide, and yet glanced every now and then at the child with loving, hungry eyes.

The baby began to cry loudly, and his mother, a dark, attractive woman in the early thirties, said crossly to her husband, "You take him and keep him quiet. It's your turn, and I'm tired of his noise."

Miss Brett looked quite pained, and her pale cheeks flushed when the father replied, even more crossly, "He'll soon stop. Remember I carried him all the way from the hotel."

Linda couldn't bear this. Very timidly she said, "Perhaps . . . If you'd let me, I'd like to . . . I mean, can I take him?"

The party of tourists moved on, the guide still talking, but James Osborne lingered to watch the little scene. The handsome girl looked Miss Brett up and down, a cool, appraising glance, insolently indifferent, and then handed the baby over. Quite clearly the glance said, "Funny little spinsterish thing, but she seems to want to."

Aloud, she said, "If you really wish to. Many thanks. For a few minutes, then."

Mr. Osborne felt annoyed. He had caught the delight in the little woman's face, intercepted, too, the glance that flickered from father to mother, the tiny, imperceptible shrug that meant, "Let her! What does she matter?" Relieved of their burden, they strolled away, leaving Linda to cope with the five-months-old baby, who, though small and under-nourished, would soon grow heavy for her slender arms.

OSBORNE glanced after them. They were scarcely pretending to listen to the guide. Idly he wondered why they were there. In spite of their excellent English, there was something foreign about them. Probably provincial French, who would like to boast when they returned to their native town, "Yes, we did England thoroughly, even the dull old Cathedrals."

It was a different matter with Linda Brett; she wanted passionately to hear all about the Abbey; she couldn't bear to miss a minute of this wonderful experience. To be travelling at last! How often in her quiet Devon village she had longed for it, planned for it; but it had seemed forever impossible, the shadow of a dream. And now that she was forty-two her dream had come true. In spite of the baby's weight, she pressed forward to join the others.

Presently James Osborne spoke gently to her. "Isn't that child rather heavy? Let me take him while you look at everything."

Actually she blushed; the soft colour rose to her pale cheeks, and he thought, half-amused, half-incredulous, "She's blushing because we haven't been introduced. She belongs to the Victorian age."

But she clung obstinately to the baby. "Thank you, but I like carrying him."

He smiled, gently insistent. "My nieces tell me I'm a bully," he said, and took the boy from her. Miss Brett was quite startled and a little affronted, but he didn't seem to notice it.

The baby wasn't fretful now. He lay comfortably on James Osborne's strong arm and gazed placidly and with deep concentration at Linda Brett's plain blue felt hat.

"Sort of hat women ought to wear," thought Osborne, the old-fashioned. "Pretty hat. Not one of those fools of things that look like inverted saucers or bantam roosters."

Linda had bought that hat for her first travel adventure, and she would have been greatly reassured if she had known of the tall stranger's approval. She had been a little bit doubtful. Even so, it had been extraordinary to walk into a smart shop and say, "A pale blue felt, please," and buy it recklessly without caring that it cost a pound more than she had meant to spend. Imagine wasting a pound!

But as she came out of the shop, of course Father roared disapproval. It was really very tiresome the way he kept butting in, now that he was dead. It was unfortunate that his voice remained vividly in her memory, and the sort of things he would be bound to say, so that Miss Brett could almost be sure she actually heard him. It was always happening, and now he said with startling distinctness. "Wasting a pound! What's all this tomfoolery? It's no use you dolling yourself up—besides, what's wrong with your old hat?"

Yes, that was certainly what he would have said, and she ought to know, for she had had nineteen years of that. Her parents had married late, and she had been only twenty-three when her mother died. She was forty-two when, a few months ago, the Colonel had elected to follow his wife. The years in between had been spent in "being a good daughter," "showing her gratitude," "doing her duty and looking after her father." During the last ten the Colonel had be-

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come more feeble, more ill-tempered, more exacting.

And the dutiful daughter? Well, Linda had simply grown older and a little faded. The other day, when she was going through some of the Colonel's papers, she had come across an old photograph of herself, taken when she was twenty-one. She had sat very still, looking at it for some time. A laughing girl, gentle, a little timid, and very pretty. She had been training as a nurse when the telegram came telling of her mother's death, and there had been a young doctor.

Oh, well, nothing had come of that. He had written at first, and once had come down to Devon to see her, but the Colonel had been so intimidating that the visit was a dreadful failure.

"What's that chap want? Looks like a fool to me. Go out this evening? Nonsense. What about my game of cribbage?"

And so it had all ended just like that, and two years later she had seen his engagement in the paper.

Since then she had lived entirely in the depths of the country, with hardly a day away from her father, and only four brief visits to London in all those nineteen years.

"What's the point of gaddin' about? Costs money and never did anyone any good."

She had scarcely met a man except the vicar and the doctor and a few old cronies of her father's who came at first to see him and said, "This your daughter, Brett? Lucky fella with a pretty girl to look after you."

The pretty girl had looked after him for nineteen years, and now she was seeing Westminster Abbey for the first time. She was going to travel. Great Britain first, then perhaps the Continent.

It was still like a miracle to her. For one thing, she hadn't expected there to be any money; Father had never acted as if there was, and she had imagined there would be nothing at all when he and his pension died together. The lawyer had actually been faintly apologetic about it.

"Not very much for you, I'm afraid. Only bread and butter. His life insurance, of course, and some savings, all soundly invested. About £150 a year."

Bread and butter? Security, with what she could earn in one way or another. It was more than she had dared to hope. It must have gone to her head, for she heard her own voice saying quite boldly, "Mr. Bryant, I suppose there isn't—any cash?"

He looked surprised, gazing at her benevolently over his spectacles, and thinking to himself that old Brett's daughter must have been a pretty little thing.

"Cash? Now, let me see. Well, if you care to accept that offer for your father's books, and to sell those Indian carpets, I expect there'd be an odd hundred or so."

It was wealth. She had accepted the offer and gone straight to a tourist agency, asking first to be shown the sights of that unknown city of London. It was most exciting, but, of course, as she came out Father had to pipe up and say, "The woman's mad! Gallivantin' at her age." Really, he might have the decency to keep quiet now that he was dead!

SO here she was, beginning on her trip, listening to the wonderful story of the Abbey, and actually walking beside a strange man who was carrying — really in quite a knowledgeable way — a poor little baby whose parents seemed rather neglectful. At this moment the baby removed his gaze from her hat, looked up into James Osborne's face ,and gurgled with toothless laughter. Linda couldn't restrain her delight.

"Oh, isn't he a little dear," she cried, quite forgetting that one didn't talk to strangers.

James Osborne thought, "The womanly type. Didn't know they existed now. Wonder where she's been hiding all these years."

But Miss Brett gave him no opportunity to find out just then, for they had caught up with their guide and she was listening spellbound to the story of the Poets' Corner.

Osborne, however, was a persistent man, and he liked the little woman with the very blue eyes. They were in the same party, and later, at the hotel, he contrived to sit next to her at dinner. There was something strangely untouched about her, and he was very interested in people. He did it skilfully, telling her first all about himself.

"An Australian. Yes, my first trip to the Old Country. Promised it to myself when I was at the war. Oh, yes, I got in—a bit difficult, but one can do a lot with lies and hair dye. When it was over, I went back to the farm for a time."

"A farm?" cried Miss Brett, with visions of cosy little Devon holdings. "How lovely. Do you have cows and chickens?"

When she heard it was a matter of two thousand acres in New South Wales, she was staggered. But she made a good listener, and as he talked of his life she sensed the passion behind the unemotional words, the love of space and light and open country. When he had finished and said, "Your turn now," she sighed sharply.

"But there's nothing to tell. I've just lived in the country and looked after father."

He'd guessed it was something like that, though he'd pictured an ailing and selfish mother, not an autocratic and alarming Colonel. "And I did want to do some war work, but Father said my duty lay at home."

After that remark, Osborne knew all about Father, knew why she seemed so different, so untouched by this modern world; knew, too why she was timid. She was that sort. Born to be bullied, and Father had bullied her.

They talked long over coffee in the hotel lounge, for James knew better than to suggest a concert or a film. She would consider that presuming on a few hours' acquaintance. But he consoled himself with the knowledge that they would be sight-seeing in the same party to-morrow, and then travelling in the same train to Scotland.

THAT night Linda Brett slept fitfully. The exciting events of the day raced through her head, and, just as she was beginning to settle down, there was the sound of a baby crying in the next room. She sat up sharply. The Brandons—that was the name of the young couple with the baby—must be on the other side. She could hear them stirring and the baby crying at intervals.

Miss Brett felt sorry for them. It must be so difficult with a child in a hotel, and again she wondered why they had come on a tour like this with a baby. They didn't seem very devoted to it. Presently she got up, with a vague idea of offering to help them. Perhaps they would be glad to sleep and let her have the baby. She wanted passionately to hold the tiny ailing creature in her arms.

But at this moment the crying ceased. Linda tip-toed to the window; it opened on a balcony and so did the room next door. She listened to see if the wailing would start again. Instead she heard voices, low and angry.

The man's voice said, "To hell with the kid! This idea of yours, it was a fool's plan"; and the woman's sharp retort:

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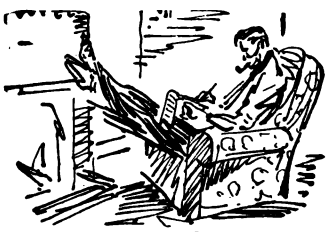

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"It is working well. Be quiet. These walls are thin."

Miss Brett crept back to bed, shocked at her eavesdropping, deeply shocked at the horrible man. "To hell with the kid!" He didn't deserve to be a father. She lay in bed for a long time, hot with anger, wishing, dreaming . . . Oh, what was the use of dreaming, when you were forty-two and a spinster, with just three pounds a week?

In the morning she peered into the glass with anxious eyes. Yes, she did look pale and tired. "Every day of my age," she said grimly, and then quite clearly heard Father's voice booming, "And why not? You're in the forties, aren't you?" Very much in the forties this morning.

She went to her suitcase and quickly took a little parcel from the very bottom, hidden under the nightgowns. She had bought it for this trip, but of course she hadn't dared to use it; Father didn't seem nearly dead enough for that.

But now she broke the chemist's seal with hands that trembled a little. What would the Colonel have said? No need to ask; there he was, growling away. "Mutton masqueradin' as lamb! Wash it off this minute and try to look respectable." But she didn't wash it off; for the first time she defied Father, and even made a little face at his memory. "Do keep quiet. I shall do as I choose," she said stoutly.

But all the same she contented herself with a little lipstick and a touch of the powder. James Osborne noticed it when she came into the dining-room and was curiously touched. The little thing looked tired. Had a bad night, perhaps. Needed someone to take charge of her. Oh, well, he'd jolly well see that she didn't go lugging other people's kids about to-day.

BUT there was no sign of the Brandons this morning, and Linda was disappointed. Somehow she was feeling uneasy about the little baby. James Osborne, however, was glad; it meant that he had her whole attention. By the end of the day they knew a great deal about each other. Linda knew, for example, that he had been married twenty years ago; a brief romance, for the young wife had died at her baby's birth.

"The boy died, too," said James quietly, and then was amazed at having confided this, his youthful sorrow now almost healed, to a stranger he'd only known for a couple of days. How sensitive she was; actually there had been tears in her eyes when she heard of the baby's death.

Packing his case afterwards at the hotel, Osborne reflected that it had been a good day. For the first time since he'd landed at Southampton he hadn't felt lonely. That loneliness was strange, for he'd brought plenty of introductions, and people had been kind and hospitable. Still, it had been there till this chance meeting, this sudden companionship. That was what this woman was — she was companionable. He found himself looking forward to the journey north.

At the station they saw the Brandons just ahead of them. He was carrying the baby in

"City Zoo? I wish to report a leak!"

its canvas cot, and Linda was surprised to feel anger surge up in her again. "To hell with the kid!"

They were all in the same compartment; Linda, James Osborne, the two Brandons, a severe woman who had cross-questioned the guides most unpleasantly, and a little rabbitty man whose name no one seemed to know. The baby was asleep in its cot on the floor, and James was wondering whether he could suggest the rabbitty man changing seats with Miss Brett, when he heard Mrs. Brandon say in a sharp whisper to her husband, "There . . . Passing now!" James looked up and saw a tall man with keen eyes glancing into their carriage. He walked on, turned and came back. Osborne saw him pause and speak to another man, as large, as carefully inconspicuous as himself.

At that moment he became aware of something wrong, of tension in the air. Then things happened quickly. Mrs. Brandon got up, exclaiming agitatedly, "But this is the wrong train! This is the non-stop! We must get out at once."

When Osborne tried to protest that this was the train on which their party was booked, she pushed roughly past him.

"The baby," cried Linda. "What about the baby?"

"My hands are full. Please pass it through the window."

"Yes, yes," fussed the rabbitty man. "Hurry! Hurry! You've only got three minutes."

Osborne picked up the carry-cot and was ready to pass it through the window. Linda was almost in tears; she would never see the baby again, and never know whether these strange parents were really good to him.

"Lord, they're cutting it fine," muttered Osborne uneasily, and the little man gave a really rabbitty squeak of anxiety. But no face appeared at the window. No hands were held out for the baby. The Brandons had disappeared.

"Child desertion!" trumpeted the severe woman in the corner. "I didn't like the look of that pair from the beginning."

"Nonsense," said Osborne sharply. "They can't push through the crowd. Here, let me out. I'll take the baby to them."

AT that moment the train began to move. There was nothing to be done about it. The conductor was very sympathetic, but had no suggestions for the moment. Impossible to pull up the train. Impossible to find the parents, who were probably distracted. They would, of course, telegraph to Edinburgh, and the baby would be properly looked after by the authorities until they could reach it.

"Meantime," said the severe woman bitterly, "we are to be kept awake all night! Criminal carelessness, if not worse."

"I told them to be quick," moaned the rabbitty man. "I told them they were cutting it too fine."

But James Osborne said thoughtfully, "The wrong train? Queer thing. I wonder, now . . . What? Oh, the baby? well, he's not doing any harm at the moment, is he?"

Miss Brett frowned quite severely at this levity, and said with great firmness, "I will be responsible for the baby until his parents can claim him. I— I have had nurse's training."

Her defiant eyes met Osborne's, daring him to remind her of that one brief year, so long ago. She didn't look born to be bullied now. She looked, he thought, like a fierce little

bird, ready to defend its nest from all comers. He liked her spirit much more than he had liked her timidity.

She had common sense, too. It was she who thought to search in the big pocket at the end of the carry-cot, and who triumphantly produced two bottles, ready filled and only needing heating. From the other pocket she brought a bundle of napkins. At sight of these the severe woman snorted and shut her eyes; the rabbitty man hurriedly extinguished himself behind his paper; and James Osborne helped Miss Brett to change and feed the baby. Neither of them had time to feel the situation embarrassing, or even unusual.

Much later, when she thought everyone was asleep and the child stirred and cried, she lifted him gently from his cot and cuddled him to her. But Osborne was awake; he whispered a remonstrance, but she only said, "He's so small, and there's only to-night."

Linda didn't sleep much, and neither did James Osborne. She held the tiny, fretful baby close, thinking, "If he were mine . . . " When he was beginning to grow heavy, Osborne leant across and took him from her. "Let me have him. I told you I was a bully. Go to sleep."

As she closed her eyes, she saw his kind, weather-beaten face looking down at the baby, and thought, "Poor man. He must be remembering his own little son."

And so the night passed, waking and sleeping, both of them in a strange, bewildered contentment. Miss Brett thought once, "To-morrow it will be over. The Brandons will come by the first train, and in a few days Mr. Osborne will be gone, too."

And then, of course, Father's voice had to butt in, saying loudly, "And a good thing too, my girl! Carryings-on, and at your age." Really, Father was getting more trying every day.

At last the morning came and with it the end of the journey. As they neared the city. James could read one fierce and unanimous resolution in the faces of their two companions. The rabbitty man began to throw his possessions together in a sort of frenzy.

"Well, here we are. Someone will help you, of course."

The severe woman merely picked up her suitcase and made for the door, saying briefly, "Good-bye. Doubtless we'll meet again on the trip. The authorities will relieve you of that unfortunate child."

The train had hardly stopped before they were gone, their backs saying clearly, "We refuse to be involved."

BUT James Osborne and Linda were heavily involved. They realised this the moment the big man with keen eyes entered their compartment and introduced himself as Chief Inspector Moore, from Scotland Yard. He thanked them very warmly for looking after the baby, and said politely, "Will you bring it and come with me?"

They looked at each other in bewilderment, and both stooped to pick up the carry-cot. Their hands met and there was a brief but wordless tussle. Then James went triumphantly off with the baby and Linda followed meekly behind. In the big police car, as they sped to headquarters, they had the first hint of the business in which they had become tangled. When Inspector Moore finished speaking, there was a silence, and then James whistled softly.

"Crooks, both of them! So that was why they bundled out of the train. They saw you and guessed."

"Unfortunately, yes. But my men will have them by now. They couldn't get away. We'd have got them the minute they landed in England, but for the baby."

Linda, whose heart was wrung for the poor little child of criminals, said quickly, "Oh, it was kind of you to think of the baby," and then wondered why the Inspector tried not to smile. "After all," she persisted, "it shows they have some good in them. It must have been so difficult to take him, but they wouldn't leave him behind."

James refrained from pointing out that this was just what they had done, but Inspector Moore said grimly, "On the contrary, the baby was a very clever dodge and made things much easier for them. We were looking for a pair of crooks—not a young couple with a baby. They were in several rackets."

Linda was trying not to cry, and her hand had gone out in a protective gesture towards the baby. "Poor little thing," she cried. "Poor baby to have such wicked parents."

"It isn't *their* baby," the Inspector said quickly. "They haven't got a baby. Why, they are not even married."

Linda thought of what she had heard in the hotel bedroom, and suddenly said, "So that was what they meant about a plan."

"What plan," said the Inspector sharply. "What did they say?"

It was most embarrassing for Miss Brett, but somehow

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she managed to repeat—oaths and all—the conversation she had overheard at her window. The Inspector nodded, and Osborne asked in a puzzled way, "But where on earth did they manage to get the child? After all, you can't buy a baby as you can a pup."

"Not in England," replied the detective grimly, "but in Central Europe, for example. But here we are. I should be able to give you all the facts in a few minutes. I expect a 'phone message shortly."

The baby woke and began to cry, and Inspector Moore said hurriedly, "I'll ring for a matron. Best to send it to one of the Homes for the present."

Linda Brett was on her feet, her weariness forgotten, looking more like a small, angry bird than ever. She said, "No. There's no need to do that. I can look after him. There's still one bottle left."

With an air of mastery that sat oddly on her thin shoulders, she produced the last bottle from one pocket of the carry-cot, and a clean napkin from the other. Picking up the baby, she swept to the door, saying briskly, "Take me to some private room. I shall need some hot water."

Both men looked cowed and the Inspector led her hurriedly away. When he came back, he glanced at Osborne with humorous eyes.

"Extraordinary things, women. Now, that little thing looks meek as a kitten, born to be bullied, but put a baby in her arms and she'll fight the whole world."

Which was just what Linda prepared to do when the facts were known.

The Brandons — who, of course, were not the Brandons at all, but had some Russian name—had been arrested in a very respectable small hotel; questioned, they showed an entirely callous disregard of the baby. It had made convenient camouflage, but now they were done with it. It was as simple as that to their curiously one-track minds.

"But whose is it?" Osborne persisted, and the Inspector shrugged; not callously, but sadly.

"No one's. Anyone's. It's just as I suspected. A fantastic story, or would be in any other than this year of grace, and any place but Central Europe. They got the baby somewhere in East Berlin. Found a woman ready to sell her child—oh, these things do happen, Miss Brett, when people are starving. They paid cash for it there and then, and don't even know the woman's name. That's all there is to it—as simple as buying a pup. They're speaking the truth, simply because they care too little about it to bother to lie. They say the baby was starving and in rags, so it must be put to the credit side of their account that at least they fed and clothed it."

"For their own purpose," commented Osborne. "Clever. The perfect camouflage."

"Very clever. They crossed from Paris under our very noses. An ordinary decent young couple with their baby."

"But," cried Miss Brett, who didn't care in the least what was happening to the Brandons, or whatever their impossible name was, "But what is going to be done with him now?"

"No use trying to check up on any parentage. Perhaps he's lucky to have got away from them. There's nothing for it but an orphanage . . . They're very good places, Miss Brett, and probably someone will adopt him. It's a romantic story and adoption's all the rage now."

"Adoption?" Miss Brett's voice was a thin whisper. Her mind was asking cautiously, "Could you do it on three pounds a week?" and her heart was replying furiously, "Yes—if I worked. I could get a job as a cook—even Father said I could cook—and they wouldn't mind the baby if I took small wages."

James Osborne was watching her, but he said nothing, and at that moment the Inspector was called away. As he left, he said, "I'll send for one of the matrons to take the baby. Really, we're very grateful."

But James interrupted him, and his voice sounded authoritative.

"Not just yet. We'll bring him when we're ready." Surprised, the detective went out and left them alone.

They faced each other silently across the carry-cot in which the child was sleeping peacefully now. Then Linda said, "They're not going to have him."

She was trembling so much that it seemed necessary for James to put his arm about her and say gently, soothingly, "Of course they're not. We're going to adopt him ourselves."

"We?" It was the merest thread of a whisper.

"You and I. We will take him home and bring him up a good little Australian. Will you marry me, Linda?"

Miss Brett was understood to say that she couldn't. He mustn't . . . They'd only known each other . . . He ought to marry someone young. . . . He laughed and took her into his arms.

"Why! — You've done your hair differently, dear."

"You're going to marry me as soon as it can be done," he repeated gently. "You couldn't possibly bring him up alone. Why, he'd bully you as soon as he could walk. Far better to be bullied by me. You know, Linda, you were born to be bullied."

"Father always used to say that," she whispered, nestling very comfortably in his arms. "I expect he's saying it now—'You always were a perfect fool, Linda; born to be bullied'."

They both laughed, and then James said quite angrily, "Just let me hear him! I'd like a word with your father."

And, strangely enough, that must have been just the sort of treatment that Father had always needed, for it is certain that the voice that had so worried Miss Brett was never once heard by Mrs. James Osborne. ●

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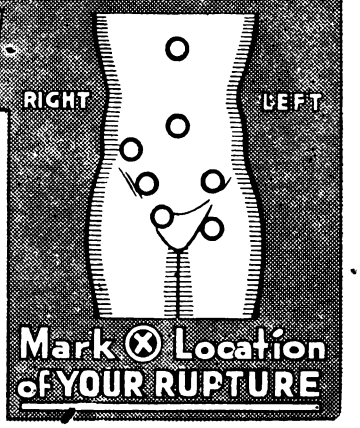

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WINGS REGAINED

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF

WHEN Tohwah, the whistling swan, and his mate, the pen, reached the coast of Northern California early in November, they felt their southward migration was finished. A dozen pairs of the great white birds had left their nesting grounds in Alaska, north of the Arctic Circle, when a mid-October sun rode so low on the horizon that ice formed all day and thickened during the night.

Led by its oldest male, or "cob," with Tohwah relieving now and then, the V-shaped phalanx of swans followed the Pacific coast down from the north, along the shores of British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. Swifter than either ducks or geese, the whistlers with their average wingspread of six feet could fly upwards of seventy miles per hour if endangered.

Their trip had been a perilous one. Law-breaking hunters and wild animals harrassed them when they stopped, eagles attacked them on the wing, while airplanes filled them with dread. Two of their number had been shot, another was dived upon and killed by an eagle, but the rest arrived at journey's end in safety.

Now they were scattered along the coastal lagoons and stream mouths of the Redwood Empire, a hundred miles south of Oregon, in an abundant land that never froze. Here they would spend the winter and build up reserves of strength for their return flight to the Arctic in spring.

Tohwah and Pen chose a secluded pond near Widow White Creek mouth in Humboldt County, where a concrete dam, erected long ago, impounded several acres of water. Sections of this pond had been seeded to food grasses by a conservation-minded owner who lived some distance away. Fir, alder, and willow covers shut in much of it, and beavers lived there, while deep mud banks along the shore made the place an ideal retreat. What the swans did not know was that, on certain days, the pond' owner liked to invite friends over to shoot.

The pair of swans were pleased with their new location. True, a logging railroad passed nearby, and on the other side of this was a hunting cabin that belonged to the pond's owner. But these were well screened by trees, while the pond itself, with its succulent water snails and profuse food-grasses, quite satisfied them. Also, there were numbers of good hiding places, as well as a small island in one neck of the pond, while the familiar rumble of the Pacific Ocean sounded assurance, a half-mile away.

Life is a long battle for the creatures of the wild, but sometimes one finds an unexpected human ally.

At first, Tohwah and Pen were disturbed when the logging train made its twice-daily trip past their haven. But when they found it never approached the pond, they came to pay no more attention to it than did the several half-tame ducks that lived there all year. They could not realise that, while friendly eyes watched them from the train, word would spread to others, less friendly, in time.

THE swans selected an alder thicket, intergrown with cattails and near the creek inlet, for their roosting place. For the first two nights, they slept undisturbed. On the third night, they were awakened by a feeling of danger that made every nerve tingle. For moments they heard nothing except the riffle of the stream as it flowed into the pond. Then came the very slightest of movements, close by. A pause, and the sound was repeated, nearer this time.

High in a fir tree, a great horned owl's hoot boomed across the night. Out in the pond, a duck yeeped and was still. Tension heavy as a nightmare brooded over the scene, waiting to explode.

Suddenly Tohwah's mind was made up. With a crash and flap, he and Pen burst free of their shelter toward the water. The instant they started, two furred forms leaped out of the darkness and landed atop them. With mad clamouring and beating of wings, the swans pushed into the water dragging their attackers, while these tried to tear through their neck feathers and sever the life-cord within.

But the coyotes had taken on bigger game than they knew—over twenty pounds of swan apiece. In seconds they were pulled into the water, where the swans had the advantage. Wings that could break a man's leg buffeted them until they wanted only to escape. They let go and plunged toward shore, hastened by hissing beaks that struck snake-like at their hindquarters, gouging out fur.

Tohwah and Pen retreated to the small island to nurse their hurts, while a bevy of ducks yammered in alarm. They had not chosen the island for a roost at first because it had no thickets, and only a sparse growth of cattails. Now it seemed a welcome refuge, and they never roosted ashore again.

The horned owl swung down from his watchtower on soundless wings, crossed the pond to look, and swooped upon a hare in an adjoining meadow. He bore it back to the fir tree, screaming of death, while every creature on the pond froze in silence.

NEXT morning, a man came to Widow White Creek pond. Tohwah and Pen got a glimpse of him as he approached from the railroad embankment, and took to the air. The man watched the broad-winged birds gain altitude and veer out toward the sea. He shook his head in regret, for he was the pond's owner, and the train crew had told him about the swans.

Later, he discovered tufts of drifting white feathers about the swans' recent roosting place, and reconstructed the night's attack.

"Bobcats or coyotes," he soliloquised. "Too bad. They'll never come back to this place now."

The man was a busy executive with a lumber company, and rarely visited his pond during the week. Few others came on to the premises, as he did not want it disturbed, and his name carried weight. Thus, there were days at a time when Tohwah and Pen saw no evidence of mankind except the logging train, and they became more and more contented with their haven. Often they made flights up and down the coast to visit others of their flock, and would not see the pond's owner when he stopped by. But night always found them back at their roost on the small island. Food abounded everywhere, and they were regaining the weight they had lost during their long flight from the Arctic.

It was the week when duck season opened, past the middle of November, that matters at the pond suddenly changed. The swans had heard suspicious sounds ashore, towards

dawn one morning. But, since nothing tried to molest them on their island, they did not fly.

Just before sunrise, several loud bangs shattered the new day's calm, and wild ducks took wing, crying alarm.

Startled, Tohwah ran the length of the island with outspread wings and launched himself over the water and into the air, with Pen following. He was putting all his strength into the getaway, when a blast and a blow knocked him into the water. Wild with fear, he tried to take off again, but could not. One wing was useless.

Men called out, while Pen flew away, but no more shots were fired. Faster than a canoe could travel, the big male swan paddled back to his island and hid in the cattails.

Figures rose out of the brush on shore. "Good Lord, I thought it was a goose!" a man's voice exclaimed.

Overhead, Pen circled anxiously in the growing light, crying with that silver-fluted note which distinguishes the whistler from its almost extinct relative, the trumpeter swan.

Then an even more terrifying thing happened to Tohwah. Two men got into a boat and rowed across the water toward the island . . . the one place he and Pen had considered safe. When their direction became obvious, Tohwah backed out of the reeds and, beating his wings and paddling full speed, raced to the far lower end of the pond. But the men in the boat did not follow.

"His wing isn't broken," said the owner. "You could tell from the way he flapped it. Looks as if only the tip is disabled."

The visitor who had done the shooting was downcast. "What a trigger-happy yahoo I am," he said. "But I never dreamed there'd be swans here."

"Of course not," said the owner. "I'm to blame for that. I forgot to mention them. In fact, I had only seen them a couple of times myself."

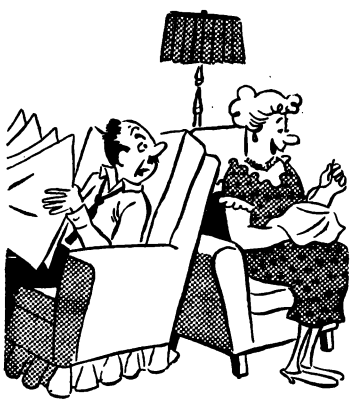
"Look, Herb," said the visitor. "Why don't you close this place to any more hunting until that fellow heals up? Perhaps we can catch him and have a veterinary look at that wing."

"I think you're right," said the owner. "We'll finish our morning's shoot, and then call it a job until mister whistler mends up. He'll leave fast enough after that."

BUT the appearance of the men had driven the wild ducks away and, for the next hour, only a straggling few came back. Finally they gave it up and went to the cabin for breakfast.

They had been out of sight for perhaps a half-hour when a white form materialised out of the sky, and Pen dropped down towards the pond, crying anxiously. Tohwah came out of hiding at the end of the pond, and headed back to the island with answering tremolos.

For several minutes, Pen flew back and forth over the Widow White marsh area at what would have been a perilously low level, had there been gunners about. Then she



"I love embroidery. It gives me something to think of while I talk."

dropped on to the water with easy grace, legs folded, instead of braced ahead like ducks and geese. What may have passed between the pair of swans is denied mankind's best devices to record. Thereafter, Pen took up unceasing watch over her crippled mate, sharing the tragedy which had struck him.

But no more hunters visited the pond now. In fact, no men came to it at all—although a man who walked back and forth along the railroad tracks at times worried the swans. What they had no way of knowing was that he was the lumber railroad's right-of-way inspector, who had been asked by Herb to watch for trespassers.

Tohwah stayed on the island at all times now, venturing ashore for food only at dawn and sunset. Pen clucked and bustled about him, ready to sound the danger call upon slightest suspicion. At times, she would lay her neck on to Tohwah's and croon to him with a soft wow-wow-wowooo that made the inspector rub his eyes in disbelief, and debate whether to risk telling Herb what he had seen, or not.

Toward week's end, Herb and the inspector held a conference at the cabin.

"He flaps his wings," the inspector said. "But he can't seem to get traction. He has a disabled wing tip, all right. Do you suppose we'd better catch him and look at it?"

Herb shook his head. "That'd just scare hell out of both of 'em, I'm afraid. Tell you what, Elmer—I'll bring down a sack of corn kernels and we'll take some out to the island every day. You do the job on week days, and I'll take care of it Saturdays and Sundays. If we feed him plenty, he ought to knit up faster. What d'you think?"

"It's a deal," approved the inspector.

That same day, Tohwah and Pen were thrown into panic by the appearance of the boat, and it was some time before Pen returned and the two of them dared approach the island again. There they found golden kernels scattered about, and began eating at once.

Within a fortnight, they had come to associate the boat with delicious food. Pen no longer flew away, but went only to the end of the pond with her mate. Tohwah stopped trying to hide, and watched eagerly while Elmer or Herb spread the grain. Hardly would the man reach the railroad embankment before both birds were back on the island. But Tohwah's wing remained disabled.

Then one day Elmer noticed an intruder's tracks along the pond shore, and at the boat landing. They were fresh-made that morning, and there was evidence of shooting. He telephoned Herb, and decided to stay overnight in the cabin.

The swans, also, had seen a strange figure skulking about, gun in hand. Instinctively, they lay low in the rushes on the far side of their island, nor did Pen fly when the man shot a half-tame duck down by the dam.

The intruder had come from a jaloppy camp, attracted by rumours of big birds at Widow White Creek pond. He noted that someone had been feeding corn when he tried to break the lock on Herb's boat, and decided to watch. It was then he saw the swans, and was not long in discovering that one of them was crippled. But the sun had risen by then, and he was afraid to shoot.

NEXT morning, before dawn, the intruder was back with a snare and corn. He laid out a tempting golden heap on the shore nearest the island, set his snare, and went into hiding.

For some time, the two swans watched in suspicion. But the corn appeared harmless, and presently Tohwah ventured toward shore to feed, as he had done in the past. He paddled back and forth in front of it, but all seemed quiet, although this was the first time food had been left on shore instead of the island. Pen hung back, whistling querulous notes, but she was accustomed to the corn coming from men now, and could see no apparent danger, despite the change.

Then Tohwah made up his mind. He stepped ashore and commenced picking up the yellow kernels. Hardly had he gobbled down his first beak-full when something seized his ankles—and he was caught!

In vain he beat his wings and lunged hissing at the intruder, who sprang out of the brush. In vain Pen rushed at the outlaw, to lose heart when he shouted and swung a club at her. A blow on the head stilled Tohwah, and the thief shoved him into a gunnysack.

He was running toward the railroad track when Elmer, armed with a pickaxe handle, stepped into his path.

"All right," he said quietly. "Walk ahead of me to the cabin. And remember—all I want is an excuse to knock your head off."

They reached the cabin in silence. "Inside," ordered Elmer. "Line up with your face to the wall and take hold of the moulding over your head with both hands. And if you so much as squirm—"

He picked up the telephone. In the sack, where he had been dropped on the floor, Tohwah quivered ever so slightly.

BY the time Herb arrived with a game warden, Tohwah, who had been taken out of the sack, was showing faint signs of life. Elmer and the warden examined him, while Herb kept the prisoner covered.

"He should come out of it," the warden said. "Though

it's a wonder this baboon didn't whack his head clean off."

Elmer was looking at the swan's crippled wing. "It's lucky he was caught, all right,'" he said. "This tip needs to be wired into place before his wing can knit properly."

"Good enough," said Herb. "We'll take him to a veterinary."

"We don't need to, Herb," said the inspector. "I worked for a vet in my younger days, and we've got a first aid kit right here, as well as stainless steel leader wire. It'll be easy to fix him up while he's still groggy."

A half-hour later, with his broken wing tip skillfully wired in place, Tohwah was carried to the edge of the pond and released. Overhead, a worried Pen circled high and watched. The men gave the big swan a gentle push, and instinct prompted him to paddle toward the island. But it was obvious that he was a sick bird.

"That's about all we can do," Elmer said.

"Let's get out of here so his mate will come back," said Herb. "And come over to my house for breakfast. You should have a medal."

It was several days before Tohwah's consciousness cleared from the cruel blow that had all but severed his head. Pen would not go from his side as he drooped in a daze, although at first, when the boat came with food, she wanted desperately to fly away.

AT final last, Tohwah began to recover and, as his appetite returned, his awareness of self came back. At first, he and Pen tried to remove the tiny wires that secured his wing tip, but it would be some time before these would rust away and fall off. Finally, since the wires caused no trouble, the swans came to regard them as part of Tohwah's regular equipment, and forgot them.

One day, in the midst of a January downpour, Tohwah decided to fly. With Pen's fluting contralto urging alongside, he made a run down the pond, beating his wings and paddling with all his strength —and left the water.

He circled the tiny island beside his mate, only to have to land again as his wing weakened. But it was a start, and during the afternoon, when the storm diminished, he tried to fly again. This time, Elmer saw him from the railroad tracks and hastened to the telephone, while the swans rubbed necks and crooned happily.

"I'm in conference," protested Herb from the other end.

"Yeah?" snickered Elmer. "You mean the weather's too tough."

"Oh, all right. I'll be over."

For some time after Herb's arrival the two men stood on the railroad embankment and watched, while an icy drizzle trickled down their necks and seeped into their clothes.

"Of course, we could make 'em fly," Elmer observed.

"Over my dead body," said Herb. "And yours, too, if they don't, you donkey doctor!"

Then the logging train came by on its return trip, and the engineer blew a staccato of greeting. That did it, for the train rarely whistled in that secluded area. Into the air went both swans, to circle over the entire pond before Tohwah came down.

"'Twas worth it," Herb said. "You've made history. Let's go to the cabin and lift a warmer-up to their health."

Progress was slow, however, and it was February before Tohwah and Pen left the shelter of Widow White Creek pond and tried a run over the ocean. Thereafter Tohwah gained confidence as the mending wing gained strength. And with wings regained, the faithful Pen felt an upsurge of returning freedom and assurance after her long vigil.

IT was about that time that Pen began to lead Tohwah as they flew over a widening radius—a thing she had never done before. Her reasons were sound. The cob who led their flock was passing his prime, and when the change in command came, Tohwah would take over. So Tohwah must be ready when the call came to go north in March.

A few Sundays later, when a harbinger of spring was in the air, a congenial group met at Herb's cabin with their families. Interested guests were escorted along the embankment to look through the trees at the swans.

"There's a change coming," said Elmer. "I've felt it for a couple of days, and the swans have known it longer than that."

"Do you think they'll go away, then?" asked Elmer's wife.

"Sooner or later, of course, but they've been doing a lot of neck craning and trumpeting lately. And the old man can fly about as far as he wants now, I think. The way his mate stuck with him was wonderful. I've learned a lot about a wild creature's devotion."

Perhaps it was the chattering and laughter that came from the area about the cabin. Perhaps Tohwah and Pen felt it was time to reconnoiter. No one could know. But that afternoon, the men and their guests witnessed a splendid sight.

Calling in flute-like accord, Tohwah and Pen rose from the pond with translucent-winged strokes silhouetted against a lowering sun at sea. Higher and higher into the blue they mounted, while a fascinated group watched from the cabin yard. Once, the sun's rays made them reflect a shell-like pink as they banked below piled-up clouds. And then they were gone into space, while their elfin-bugle notes still echoed in the sensibilities of the watchers.

"Thus endeth the story," Herb said.

"I'm not so sure," said Elmer.

THREE days passed, but the pair of swans did not come back to Widow White Creek pond. Although Elmer knew it was not quite time for them to start north, he began to give up hope. He continued to set out food as always, but the mud hens and ducks appropriated it, now that the island was no longer occupied.

At sundown of the third day, after Elmer had gone by for the last time, Tohwah and Pen returned to their island. Corn had been spread late that afternoon, and some of it remained, which they gobbled hungrily. Tohwah's wing was as strong as ever now, and they settled for the night with cheerful chatter and ado.

They had been up and down the coast, among members of their flock, to pass the word that Tohwah was healed. And when the big white birds returned to their nesting grounds along the Arctic Ocean, he would be ready to go—and take command when the time came. All was right with their world again.

It was there Elmer found them, while on his early inspection run. Although this was not the regular feeding time, he filled a measure with corn and got into the boat. Tohwah and Pen watched him with interest, but did not leave the island until he was halfway out to it. Then they paddled about in the middle of the pond, eyeing the familiar man and boat, and giving an occasional chuckle which, to Elmer, sounded like a greeting from old friends.

Before Elmer had moored the boat ashore, the swans were back on the island, feeding. For some time, the man watched, pleased as he rarely had been. Then he unlocked the cabin and picked up the telephone.

"And my money says they'll come back every year," he told a listening Herb. "They belong with us, now." ●

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The Man Who Caught a Cold

By ERIC NORTH

THE Director of the Security Division of the Sunray Serum Laboratories sat slumped in his swivel chair, his eyes tight shut behind the bi-focals perched on the bridge of his intellectual nose, and his mouth gently gaping beneath a tangle of moustache which conformed to the very highest scientific traditions. A lesser man might have been thought sound asleep, but Miss Popcorn, poised over her shorthand notes, knew his attitude to be the outcome of intense concentration. She knew this because the Director told her so at least twice a day.

A large lump of Government coal, noisily leaping from the fire into the old-fashioned fender, as though suddenly converted to the Administrations' austerity policy, restored the Director to normal dimensions. He blinked several times, cleared his throat hastily, and said: "Er, Miss Popcorn?"

"Yes, Mr. Sodium?"

"We were dealing, I think, with Professor Pink's notes on the metabolism of the embryo of the cockroach restricted solely to a diet of seidlitz water. I had remarked . . . But perhaps you had better read me back the last sentence or so."

"Yes, Mr. Sodium . . . Quote: *I can only describe as completely irrelevant Professor Pink's statement that seidlitz water takes its name from a village in Bohemia full stop nor am I in sympathy with his thesis which maintains that the circulatory system of the cockroach is adequately represented by the equation C2 plus Z minus Y equals minus 0, full stop and unquote.*"

"Exactly," said the Director. "We will continue . . . *It must be obvious to any thinking person . . .*"

He broke off as the telephone at his elbow made faint chirping noises.

"Really! These constant interruptions . . ."

"I'll take it, shall I?" Miss Popcorn said, in reply to his annoyed eyebrows. She lifted the receiver and said haughtily: "Director's Office."

The bitter tones of the Enquiry Desk attendant, Spilligson, whose application for a further increase in salary had that morning been rejected, informed her: "There's a Mr. Tosswig down here asking to see the Director. He seems very excited."

"A Mr. Tosswig," Miss Popcorn relayed.

"What does he want?" Mr. Sodium asked irritably.

Miss Popcorn enquired.

We say "I've caught a cold" when really the cold has caught us. Mr Tosswig claimed to have turned the tables on the elusive complaint.

"Spilligson says he says it's very urgent. Something about a scientific discovery."

"Except by appointment," the Director said, "I am quite unable to see anyone at all."

"Has he an appointment?" Miss Popcorn demanded of the telephone. "If not . . . What did you say? Yesterday . . . for three o'clock this afternoon? Of course I remember taking it. What do you think I'm here for? Just a minute . . ."

The Director, dodging a wave of intense concentration, said, "Well, Miss Popcorn? Are we never to get on with our work?"

"It's that stupid Spilligson, Mr. Sodium," Miss Popcorn said, a trifle pinkly. "He's forever muddling up appointments. Why, here it is on your date pad . . . Mr. Jabez Tosswig, three p.m. I have the clearest recollection of writing it down. Spilligson . . ."

"Really, I must speak to the man," the Director murmured. "Well, I suppose I had better see this Mr. Tosspot . . ."

"Tosswig," Miss Popcorn corrected respectfully. "Very good, Mr. Sodium."

Taking her hand from the mouthpiece of the telephone, she said briskly: "The Director will see Mr. Tosswig at once, Spilligson. He wishes me to add that in future, where an appointment has been made, you will please not keep the applicant waiting unnecessarily."

After pausing a moment to enjoy the suffocated breathing of the desk attendant, she hung up and proceeded to gather her notes together.

The Director waved her back into her chair.

"By all means remain, Miss Popcorn. I shall no doubt require some notes of the conversation. A scientific discovery of some sort, I understood Spilligson to report?"

"Of extreme urgency, Mr. Sodium."

"Exactly."

THE Director permitted himself to exchange a sceptical smile with his efficient secretary. They were well used to the type of caller this Mr. Tosswig would almost certainly turn out to be. Mr. Sodium was becoming increasingly weary of the individual who insisted on confusing the Sunray Serum Laboratories with the Commonwealth Bureau of Dental Standards or the Tea Control Board.

The door opened to admit a small brisk man with a revolving Adam's apple, domed head, and darting black eyes. He seized a chair, sat down and broke into a spate of words.

"My name is Tosswig. You, sir, I believe, are Mr. Sodium, Director of the laboratories. The lady I don't know. She is no doubt your stenographer. The point is of no importance. I should perhaps tell you that science is my hobby. I am a man of a perpetually inquiring turn of mind . . ."

The Director's raised hand failing to stem the torrent, he banged it hard down on his blotting pad.

"One moment, Mr. Tosswig! All this is highly irregular. As I am particularly busy, I must ask you to come straight to your business. At most, I can only give you a few minutes of my time. Now, sir . . . ?"

"But for your interruption," Mr. Tosswig said, "I was about to do so. When you have heard what I have to say, Mr. Sodium, you will realise that time is no object. You will run your mind over the great names of science . . . Newton, Faraday, Lister, Pasteur, Marconi. But why go on? To those names you will presently add that of Jabez Tosswig, who succeeded in . . ."

Miss Popcorn coughed, and the Director interjected sharply: "Your business, please?"

His intellectual nose plainly signalled to his secretary: *The man is as mad as a sackful of snakes.* Miss Popcorn's wiggling eyebrows just as plainly replied: *You're telling me.*

"Mr. Sodium," said the visitor, with simple dignity, "the plain truth of the matter is, I've caught a cold."

"You've . . ." The Director's face slowly took on a purple tinge. "Miss Popcorn?"

"Yes, Mr. Sodium."

"Oblige me by reading back the last sentence in your notes."

"Certainly, Mr. Sodium. *Quote: The plain truth of the matter is that I've caught a cold. End of quote.*"

"Thank you," the Director said, in a quivering voice. "I was afraid my ears were playing me false." He turned flashing eyes on the visitor. "Is it possible that you make an appointment to see me . . . upset my day's work . . . merely to tell me that you have caught cold? I am not a doctor, Mr. Tosswig; neither are you in a chemist's shop. I am not interested to know that you have caught cold. I must ask you . . ."

"Pardon!" Mr. Tosswig interrupted. His Adam's apple spun like a top. "I did not say I had caught cold, I said I had caught *a* cold. The lady will bear me out."

"A difference of a mere preposition," the Director sneered. "I am not here, sir, to indulge in quibbling with strangers. Either you have caught cold or you have not. In any event, it has nothing to do with me. Go home, Mr. Tosswig, and put your feet in hot water and mustard, or go to the devil, for all I care. Miss Popcorn, will you kindly ring for Spilligson to show Mr. Tosswig out?"

"Now, now," Mr. Tosswig said, "don't let us quarrel, Mr. Sodium. If Miss Popcorn will kindly take her hand from the telephone . . . thank you, miss. Let me explain. Science today knows no more about the common, everyday cold than it did in the time of Julius Caesar. Why? Because it has never succeeded in isolating the virus. The cold thus continues to be the mainstay of patent medicine vendors, chemists, and even the medical profession, since one thing leads to another, and a mere snuffle may end in double pneumonia. It is a fascinating thought that even undertakers . . ."

"*Will* you come to the point," cried the fermenting Director.

"Certainly, Mr. Sodium. Let me put it this way: man catches cold; that is to say, the cold is in man. Ah, but supposing . . ." here Mr. Tosswig giggled excitedly, "supposing it was the other way around? Supposing, Mr. Sodium, the man was in the cold? What then?"

Clutching a heavy paper weight, the Director assailed what his agitated mind could only describe as a homicidal climax. Miss Popcorn, he noted, had turned a sickly yellow. Her hand moved feebly towards the telephone, but was hastily withdrawn as the darting eyes of Mr. Tosswig impaled her.

"What then?" the Director heard himself echoing hoarsely.

"You may well ask," said Mr. Tosswig, with rising excitement. "In a moment I will show you. Meantime, observe the importance of the distinguishing preposition. I catch *cold*. On the other hand, I catch *a* cold. Two completely differing statements. I catch *a* cold . . . in other words, I isolate it. Mr. Sodium—Miss Popcorn—that is precisely what I have done. I have caught a cold! I have it here with me in a small phial. I shall show it to you."

Miss Popcorn, on the verge of hysteria, stammered: "Please do. I . . . I've always wanted to see one, ever . . . ever since I was a little girl."

"So have I," said the Director, hauling on Miss Popcorn's lifeline. "Ever since I . . . Extremely interesting, Mr. Tosswig. Yours is indeed an epoch-making discovery."

His intellectual nose signalled to Miss Popcorn: *I suppose you can't possibly get hold of Spilligson before we get our throats cut?* And his heart sank when Miss Popcorn's eyebrows replied: *No. Mr. Sodium, I don't mind a risk in a general way, but this is making it a bit hot.*

Lines of communication were cut by Mr. Tosswig's production of a small glass bottle.

"You can't see it exactly, but I can show you where it is. I had a good look at it under the microscope just before I left home. You can take my word it's here all right, poor thing." He took the cork from the bottle and peered in. "Actually, when you know where to look for it, you *can* see it. It's coiled up in a corner."

"Aren't you . . . afraid it will escape," Miss Popcorn asked.

"It can't," Mr. Tosswig said reassuringly. "It's too sick, don't you understand? That's why I said 'poor thing.'"

The Director said feebly: "What . . . what's the matter with it? I mean, what's it got?"

"Haven't I been telling you?" Mr. Tosswig said. "It's got *me*. It's laid up with *me*. *Now* do you understand what an extraordinary contribution to science I'm making. For the first time in history the boot's on the other foot. I might say, I've tried to dose it with the usual remedies, quite forgetting that what shifts *it* out of *me*, won't necessarily shift *me* out of *it*—if you see what I mean. If anything, my doctoring made it worse. And that brings me to my point, Mr. Sodium; although science has failed to make a serum out of a cold that has been of the slightest use to *me*, the opportunity is here to attempt a serum made from myself for injection into the cold which you observe before you. That, Mr. Sodium, is the reason I am here. I offer myself cheerfully as a martyr—unless, of course, you covet the role yourself. On the other hand it seems to me that Miss Popcorn would make a particularly inviting culture."

The Director could never afterwards be sure if it was his own startled uprising, or Miss Popcorn's sudden scream, which caused Mr. Tosswig to drop the bottle in his hand. It fell to the floor in splinters, just as the Director stumbled against his bookcase and overturned a dozen long unattended tomes. A cloud of dust rose from the ancient carpet, to clothe the groping figure of Mr. Tosswig in a spiral suggestive of a genii casting a spell. From it came cries of anger and despair.

"It must have been shamming sick. Quick, we must find it!"

At that moment Miss Popcorn burst into a tornado of sneezing. Mr. Tosswig rose to his feet in gloomy silence. He turned a tragic face to the Director.

"Too late, Mr. Sodium. You observe, no doubt, the condition of Miss Popcorn? The situation has reverted to normal and the cold that I caught has now caught *her*. I shall now have to start all over again. Good afternoon."

The door closed behind him with a melancholy squeak.

Miss Popcorn continued to sneeze.

The Director staggered to his chair and stared wildly about him. His intellectual nose asked a question of High Heaven, and his scientific moustache was blown away by the winds of his dissolving sanity. ●

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The Flower in the Jungle

(Continued from page 11)

Air Force. He'd met you and discovered we were in town."

"Oh yes, sirr. Indeed, I have known Ranjit Singh from long."

There seemed little point in following up the cheek muscle story. "Has Ranjit Singh been here long? His home's in Lahore, isn't it?"

"He has been here, I am thinking—three months, sirr. I believe he has important business matters."

"Any idea what the business is?"

"Some sort of flying, sirr. He organises charter flights, I believe."

Chris looked up from his desk. The harsh white light from the corner window cut the room into segments of white and black, the former glistening with the airborne tinsel of dust, the latter, little triangles and squares of opacity. He was half in, half out of one of these squares; the straight edge of light caught his forehead and tumbled out of shape along the lines of his nose and jaw, to illuminate the desk. Above him, the ceiling fan was spinning slowly, the tips of its blades flashing white as they moved from light to shade.

"We're having dinner with Ranjit Singh this evening, and he's promised to tell us all about it. Can you give us a preview?"

"Begging pardon, sirr?"

"Can you give us some idea of what this airline of his does?"

Das Gupta, inscrutable, sat at his desk, arms folded neatly over an ample waistline, and blinked.

Oliver spoke. "We're both rather interested in it, you see. If you can tell us something about it before we go this evening, we might have one or two questions lined up for when we meet him. Save time. And in any case, a party with Ranjit Singh is going to be a bit hectic for discussion."

Das Gupta transferred his blink from one to the other, then grinned, doubtfully, the betel-stained, crimson grimace of the East.

"You gentlemen are already tired of business?"

"No," said Chris. "Why?"

"Ranjit Singh always wants pilots."

"Ye Gods, what does he do with them? He can't have all that many aircraft."

There was a pause.

"I do not know much about Ranjit Singh's work. I believe he has pilots for short periods only. They are paid every trip. Not as you pay me, once a month. And a lot more money, sirr."

The crimson grin returned for a moment, then disappeared. Das Gupta went back to his ledger.

THEY left the office at four, considerably earlier than usual, but it had been a chokingly hot day, and work, apart from being unpleasant, seemed vaguely unnecessary. Chris had a tennis appointment, and after dropping Oliver back at the flat, drove on to the Saturday Club. As he'd expected, Barrington-Smith was already changed and waiting for him at the entrance, racquet under arm and monocle in eye. Chris, in a moment of impertinence, had once squinted through the monocle while its owner had a shower. It was plain glass.

The game was a good one, but, somehow or other, Barrington-Smith seemed more than usually tedious. Tall, thin and depressingly British, he'd been in India for fifteen years, during which time he had inched his way up the ladder of social success, rather more speedily than his income had followed him. As a young man, he'd been sent out from the London office of a firm of tea agents. He had left home as an under-paid ledger clerk, to find himself, on arrival in Calcutta, a highly overpaid partner of the firm. Others, reluctant to leave the comforts of Suburbia, had made way for him. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, stunned, and surrounded by servants, settled into a sizeable two-story "bungalow" in Ballygunge, and prepared to "fit in."

This, thanks to Mrs. Smith, they did, in short order. Mr. Smith found within a month that his middle name and surname had become wed, through the agency of a hyphen. In order to achieve this, Mrs. Barrington-Smith had been compelled to open charge accounts with half a dozen of the more important shops, and telephone thirty or forty clubs, hotels and private homes asking for her husband. This latter expedient, in addition to launching the name, had the added attraction of scenting it — but not too heavily—with scandal. Who was this fellow Barrington-Smith, anyway, whose wife rang up for him at eleven p.m.?

The new name was followed briskly by a pony and syce, a car and chauffeur, and a completely different brand of English. Mrs. Barrington-Smith mastered the re-alignment of vowels and aspirates within a month; Mr. Barrington-Smith, whose heart had never really been in the matter, took ten years. Now, fifteen years after his arrival in the country, he had mastered the Old-School-Tie-Modified-for-India intonation of the Bengal Club. Mastered, that is, except for moments of excitement when Mr. Smith would drop diphthongs, aitches, monocle and Barrington in a little heap and become his cheerful Cockney self.

Usually with Chris, whom he liked, Barrington-Smith, once out of earshot of the Clubhouse, would relax. Today, however, his conversation was limited to well-modulated cries of "Out, ectually, Ai think," and "Your 'ventage, Chris, old men."

Chris was glad when it was over and he could go home.

At a few minutes past eight, he and Oliver, wearing the well-dressed businessman's uniform of black dinner jacket and white trousers, arrived at the Great Eastern. The lounge was full, with all fans whirring and every table occupied. Randy, in a white sharkskin Tuxedo and white silk puggri, got up from one of the centre tables and came up to them.

"Let's go. No point in having a drink here; too damn crowded."

"I've got the car outside. Shall we bring it, or do we pile in with you?"

"Better pile in with me. We might even get tight, and I've got a driver. Leave it here, and you can collect it before you go home."

They got into the car, Randy in front with the driver, Oliver and Chris behind.

It was almost dark as they turned up Chittaranjan Avenue, with the roadway glowing in pools of orange below the street lamps.

"I'll bet you've never been here before," said Randy. "It's called the Oasis Club, and there's nothing quite like it. Europeans can come as guests, but you can't be members. I thought we'd have dinner there, watch the cabaret, and then chew the fat afterwards."

They turned off the Avenue shortly before its intersection with the Barrackpore Road. There were no lamps in this street and the driver crawled along at a walking pace among pedestrians, dogs and cattle. A few hundred yards further on, they turned off again into a still smaller street and drew up outside a dimly-lit doorway. The driver got out and held open the front door for Randy. Chris and Oliver let themselves out of the back.

"Go on in. It's nicer inside." Randy ushered them ahead of him, and they pushed aside the hessian curtains. Inside was a dark, ill-lit barn of a room, unfurnished but for a bench in the far corner on which sat two uniformed Gurkhas. They sprang to their feet and saluted raggedly.

"Those two are retired policemen," said Randy, taking the lead and pushing open a door at the far end of the room. "They're not very smart, but they can be very useful."

Chris gasped as the door swung to behind them. They were at the edge of a large open courtyard, floodlit a pale blue from four masts, each about fifty feet high, at the corners. The centre of the space was a dance floor, upon which Indian couples in evening dress were dancing. At the far end was a raised stage upon which an eight-piece band was performing, while all around the patio were little round tables under blue umbrellas. The darkness under each umbrella was relieved by a tiny blue electric bulb on the table. Around the edge of each umbrella, like a string of rubies, were little red bulbs which lit up to draw the attention of the waiters when a button was pushed.

They stared for some time before Randy ushered them in. Every few seconds the crimson coronet above a table would flash and a white-robed waiter would run towards it.

"They seem to get service here, which is more than you find anywhere else," said Oliver.

Randy was out of earshot, advancing, hand outstretched, to be greeted by a little Indian in a white Tuxedo.

"Mookerji — two very old friends of mine, Mr. Lyle and Mr. Sturges. We used to fly together once. Mr. Mookerji is secretary of this club."

Mookerji shook the three of them warmly by the hand and ushered them to a table. As they sat down he pushed a white ivory button in the

centre of the table and the ring of bulbs bathed them for a moment in scarlet. A waiter sprang out of the shadows.

"Champagne, I suppose," said Mookerji.

"Yes, I think so. A magnum, boy."

Mookerji and the waiter went their respective ways, and in a ridiculously short time there were three filled glasses on the table and a champagne bucket beside it.

Randy raised his glass.

"Here's to the firm of Lyle and Sturges — in whatever ventures they may engage." He winked ponderously and emptied the glass at a gulp. The others followed suit.

"I said that we'd eat, and then talk about flying later. Somehow or other, I think it would be more intelligent to talk now."

"Yes, every time. Fire away."

Randy refilled their glasses and replaced the magnum in the ice bucket.

"O.K. Well, briefly, I deal, not in passengers or cargo, but in aircraft. I buy them and I sell them, and my methods, as I'm going to show you, are a bit unorthodox. And at this stage, I'll have to ask you both to give me your word of honour that not a word of what we say here is going to get out of this club."

They looked at each other through the blue haze, and he went on.

"This probably sounds very melodramatic. Normally, I just don't tell people. In your case, I think I can sell you the idea if I explain it. Are you on?"

"Why not?" said Chris. "I'll give you my word of honour right now. But I'd like to know just what makes you so confident you've found a pair of accomplices."

"Yes, I'd like to know, too," said Oliver. "But I'll give you my word."

"Right. I deliver planes of just about every description under the sun to an organisation in China. The outfit pays me here in Calcutta, through the bank, right on the nail, for every kite I deliver. Needless to say, there's a preference for fighters and bombers. Just who these people are and why they want aircraft isn't my business any more than it's yours, even though we have our own ideas. To me it's a purely business venture—and a very profitable one, too."

"And just where do we come in?"

"Ah. Here we go. I need pilots, good ones, beautiful ones. People who can stand on their own two legs. You may get stranded for upwards of a month at the end of a delivery flight."

"Where?"

"That I can't tell you just now. Somewhere in China. Very romantic."

He leant over for the bottle and refilled the glasses

"Do I take it, then, that you're offering us the job of flying a plane—or planes—to China? If so, when; how much; how long?"

Randy smiled. His face in the dim light was a dark purple, the teeth a brilliant blue.

"I can fit you up with a plane, Chris, almost any time you feel you can leave Calcutta. I'll pay you fifteen hundred chips for the delivery. Navigators get five hundred; so, Ollie, you can have a crack at shepherding Chris into China. It's quite easy to find, really. Or you can take another kite over yourself. In which case I provide navigators."

Oliver whistled through his teeth and a waiter appeared from nowhere, only to be waved away by Randy.

"As for how long, I guarantee nothing — which is the main reason I have trouble getting pilots. You should be all right. There's quite a bit of stuff coming back in the next few weeks."

"And the job is piece-work? We can become captains of industry again as soon as we get back?"

"Certainly. You may not want to, though. You may want to make it a regular thing, like Michael Wu. You may, as others have, prefer to stay on the other side and fight for the Chinks. You may discover after a trip or two that you can get a good screw by delivering the aircraft to the wrong team; in which case you wisely refrain from coming back here. For obvious reasons I have to pay pilots before the trip, so temptation is considerable. Owing to the greater number of men from Europe and America who learnt to fly during the war, the majority of my pilots are your people, not mine. And, with due deference to you both," he inclined his head, "the pink-skinned folk east of Suez are about the most corrupt set of individuals I've ever dealt with."

He drained his glass at a gulp.

"And, *entre nous*—and, once again, present company excepted – I've never had any time for them—ever."

"How about a spot of food, old boy?"

The Sikh straightened up in his chair. Behind him, the band was tearing enthusiastically into "Paper Doll."

"I'm sorry. This stuff seems to have gone to my head a bit." He pushed the ivory button. "Mind if I order for you? I know what's best in this place."

Chris turned to Oliver. "Well, what about it? Can we leave the destinies of Lyle and Sturges, Unlimited, in the hands of Das Gupta for a week or so?"

Oliver laughed. "I was just going to ask you the same thing. I think so. Frankly, I'm a little bored with high finance. A couple of weeks off will do us a lot of good." He turned to Randy. "Before we drop this subject and relax, what are these planes going to be, and where do we get them?"

"Well, I've got a C47F Dakota coming in a couple of days. You can go as pilot and navigator, or one of you can wait a week for a Mosquito and take that, and I'll give you a couple of Chinese lads as navigators. First hop for the Dak is Finjan, and an associate of mine will brief you from there on. You're lucky. I'm getting it ferried to within a few miles of here. Most of my stuff never comes here at all, and chaps have to go by road, river and rail to pick it up."

"And is the Mosquito coming here, or would one of us have to go and get it?"

"One of you would probably have to go and get it."

"Right," said Oliver. "I'll navigate for Chris."

"Splendid. It's probably best that way your first trip. The Chinks aren't very smart in the air."

"Where," said Chris, "does all this stuff come from?"

"All over the place. The organisation I'm with has agents in almost every country in the world. If you're a frustrated feeder-line pilot on the Upper Tooting-Much Binding run, all you've got to do is contact one of our men in the U.K., take the kite up for an air-check or something, and drop it down on one of our strips. We do the rest. Ditto discontented Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Yanks and what-have-you."

"And you have no political interest in this racket at all?"

"I may or may not be in sympathy with it. The important part is that I get paid—and so do you."

"O.K.," said Chris. "I'm sufficiently bored with Cal-

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cutta to close my eyes, politically, for one trip. Give us your office address and we'll come out to-morrow and fix up details."

Randy tapped his head. "This is my office. No, meet me at the main entrance of Dum Dum nine o'clock Sunday. Get everything fixed up with Das Gupta for an absence of two or three weeks, bring a change of clothes and a nice clean pocket handkerchief, and I'll have you airborne by lunch time."

"You realise you'll have to teach us to fly the damn thing?"

"Don't be silly. Any one can fly a Dak. You've been on twin-engined stuff before. Money for old rope."

They finished their dinner in silence. The cabaret, a Hungarian tap-dancer, an appalling Indian conjurer and a worse crooner, might as well have not appeared, as the audience chattered and shrieked at each other throughout the performance. Randy, now slumped in his chair, snored softly.

Shortly after eleven they woke him and left. The dance floor was now littered with humanity, jiggling to the rhythm of the band. Whether the players were Indian or not, Chris could not discover. Like everything else in the Oasis, they were blue.

"I SAY," said Barrington-Smith, rounding a corner on two wheels. "Don't you chaps think this is a spot adventurous?"

"What is?" said Chris.

"Flying yourselves up to Assam for a business trip. Surely you could have discovered some other way to get there? Dammit, you haven't flown for nearly a year. How d'you know the aeroplane's all there, and all that?"

"If you don't keep your eye on the road we won't even get to Dum Dum."

"Ha, ha; that's a good one. I was driving when you two were furtive twinkles in your Daddys' eyes." He wrenched the wheel and they narrowly missed a bullock cart. "Precision — that's all that's required. I daresay you fellows learnt it in the Air Force."

"Yes," said Oliver, "but not that well. A new coat of paint on the car and you'd have hit that bullock."

"Anyway," added Chris, "even though you're scaring hell out of us, it's good of you to bring us out here."

"Oh, think nothing of it. You couldn't have brought your own bus out and left it here. You'd have had to go in a taxi driven by some wild Sikh—and he probably would have hit that bullock cart."

"We're flying an aeroplane which belongs to one of those 'Wild Sikh's'."

"No — not really? Do I know him?"

"Possibly. He's a fellow called Ranjit Singh."

"Oh—I say—not the fellow who was in your squadron? One arm?"

"Yes, that's the chap."

They continued in silence for a minute or more.

"Well, do you know him?"

"Er, yes. You say he's a friend of yours?"

"Well, sort of. I've got nothing against him."

"You may have nothing against him, Chris, but I think he's got a sizeable chip on his shoulder about you. I may be wrong."

"Me? Whatever for?"

"Well, it was only a couple of weeks ago—the Mrs. and I—er, the better half and all that—"

"Ball and chain."

"Yes. Anyway we went along to the '300 Club'. Don't very often, you know. This fellow, whatsisname, got very drunk. Very drunk indeed—and got up on a table. He harangued us all for about ten minutes on the subject of 'white supremacy and why it isn't'."

"He may have something there."

"What? Oh. Well, anyway, this fellow became most offensive. If it hadn't been at the risk of provoking more racial nastiness, I'd have punched him on the nose, myself."

"I'm sure you would."

"Yes, I would, too. Of course, you weren't there, so you can afford to be flippant about the whole affair. As it happens, he was particularly offensive about his late squadron and the people who ran it—presumably you."

"As a matter of fact," said Oliver, "our squadron was one of the very few where we fell all over ourselves to be nice to Indians."

Chris knocked out his pipe on the window. "Yes, but the Oriental mind moves in a comparatively mysterious way to yours, Ollie. Our ideas of falling over ourselves probably only get on their nerves. And all the falling over in the world didn't make up for the fact that you and I could hie ourselves to the Saturday Club for a dance—and Randy couldn't. That sort of thing rankled far more than they ever let on."

Barrington-Smith opened his mouth, shut it, and began again.

"That arm of his was a sort of grudge against the world. How did he lose it?"

"He was shot down over Diamond Harbour by a Jap. As a matter of fact, I happen to know that he *does* nurse a grievance over it. He shouldn't have gone on that sortie at all. A fellow called Collinson was booked for it and became sick at the last moment."

"Yes?"

"I rather suspected Collinson was suffering from nerves; that he was scared stiff. He'd had a very rough spin, though, so I ordered him off the sortie and put Ranjit Singh in his place. I don't think Randy was particularly keen, either."

"Well, well. That all fits in quite well with his outburst at the '300.' He made several highly provocative remarks about Europeans being yellow. There would come a time when people who shirked their responsibilities — people who passed their dirty work on to others—would be relegated to their proper place in society, and so on. Of course, he was very, very drunk. Well, anyway, here we are. Do you want me to drive in?"

"No. Better stop outside the main gate. He said he'd meet us outside."

"O.K. Now listen. Tell me when you're due back, and I'll make a point of coming out to meet you."

Chris laughed. "Thanks a lot, Barrington-Smith, but I've no idea how long we'll be away — or even if we'll come back this way. Might have to take the train back."

"I think you'd be far better off if you took the train both ways. However, that's none of my business. Do you mind if I leave before your chum turns up?" He paused, then leant out of the car, and wrung them both by the hand. "And don't go and be too damn dashing. You've got a lot of friends here, though you may not know it, and you're going to be missed if

(Please turn to page 78)

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SOME FAMOUS DOGS

BARRY

IN the Swiss snow-covered Alps there stands a monastery which was built way back in the sixteenth century to aid people who lost their way while travelling a nearby mountain pass. In charge of it in those early days was a very wise and saintly monk called St. Bernard. He and his followers spent many years toiling against the terrific cold and snow to rescue wayfarers. Then, one day St. Bernard realised that what they really needed was an animal to help—a breed of animal that had strength enough to face all kinds of hardships, and intelligence enough to obey orders. Along with these qualities it would also need an affectionate and gentle nature for it would frequently be dealing with people who were hurt or exhausted.

St. Bernard knew that a dog would be the only animal to meet such requirements, but he could think of no one breed which combined all the qualities necessary. After pondering the position for some time, he decided he would have to set out to breed such a dog himself. Through the crossing of a shepherd dog of the Pyrenees Mountains with a Danish dog of a bulldog type, and then crossing their pup with a large species of mastiff he finally produced the perfect dog for his purpose — a large, strong and handsome fellow on which he bestowed his own name, St. Bernard.

Friends of the monks started rearing dogs of this breed at the nearby city of Berne, sending them to the monastery as soon as they were old enough to be trained. During the saint's lifetime, hundreds of mountain climbers were tracked and brought safely to the hospice by these dogs. After St. Bernard's death, the work was carried on until now the number of people saved is more than two thousand!

THE most famous of all the dogs which have passed their days in the service of this monastery is one by the name of Barry.

While a puppy in Berne he became a great favourite of local children, providing them with much fun by allowing them to ride on his back, and they were all very sorry to see him leave to take up his training. But Barry settled in at the monastery quickly and became the most promising pupil, tackling the elementary tasks set him with an ease which was quite amazing.

During his first ten years he saved forty people, bringing each one of them in from the snow entirely alone. He had developed a most extraordinarily keen sense of hearing and smell—which was to help him in the most amazing feat in his career.

ONE stormy night when a blizzard had been raging for hours, and all the dogs were harnessed for emergencies, Barry grew restive, pouncing towards the door. One of his masters opened it and listened. There was only the howling of the wind. But Barry had sensed trouble and, rushing out of the door, he was instantly lost to sight in the blinding storm.

He must have travelled miles down the snow-covered slopes, looking desperately for the object of his search. Then he came upon the huddled form of a little girl, half-frozen and almost completely covered with snow. He went carefully through his first-aid procedure, first licking her face, and then carefully lying close beside her to bring warmth back into her small body. Before long she was able to move, but Barry's super-intelligence told him that she would never be able to face the storm and the wild wind. It was then that he acted in the most amazing manner. His mind seemed to carry him back over the years to his little playmates in Berne. He lay flat on the snow, just as close as he could get to the little girl and nuzzled her gently. How she ever managed to pull her numb body on the back of the dog no one will ever know, for even she herself could not remember later.

With great determination, Barry battled against the blinding snow, progressing slowly so that the bewildered child would not slip from his back. Just as everyone at the monastery was becoming very troubled, there was the gentle padding of Barry's paws on the steps. He had brought the little girl to safety!

BARRY continued doing his work of mercy until he grew very old, and somehow he managed to retain all the energy and vitality that is usually only bestowed on young dogs. When the monks tried to keep him in retirement and made steps to prevent him going out any more on cold nights, he grew impatient with them and moped in front of the fire to show just how unhappy he really was.

Then came another terribly stormy night in which blizzards swept down once again on the mountains. Barry listened and perhaps he remembered the night so many years before when he had rescued the little girl. He became suddenly alert, scratching loudly at the door. A monk led another dog forward and, holding Barry, let it look out into the night. But the dog picked up no trace of anyone and went back to settle in a corner again. While the monk turned to look at it, Barry broke loose and bounded out.

His instinct led him to a soldier who had lost his bearings in the falling snow. Barry, with his large paws and his tongue, brushed the snow from the man's form and then stood over him, before lying down on top of his half-frozen body. Just then the soldier opened his eyes, and being dazed, thought he beheld a gigantic wolf about to attack him. He fumbled for his sword and plunged. Nothing could be done. The gallant dog was dead.

But the monks wanted this brave dog remembered in every country in the world, so they took his body back to the town of his birth and placed it in the museum where all the children of the future may come and see him as he looked in real life and hear his story told over again.

French children heard the story, too, and pleaded to have the dog honoured in some way. So it is that you may see in one of the largest pet cemeteries in Paris a beautiful statue of a St. Bernard, bearing on his back a tiny girl. It is a monument to one of the most famous dogs ever to live—Barry, the St. Bernard.

By LOUISE BATESON

BALTO

MANY of you will have heard of the hard work done by Huskies in the snow and ice of the North and South Polar regions. Recently some dogs of this breed which were to accompany the Heard Island Expedition were housed at the Melbourne Zoo, and a few city Juniors may even have been lucky enough to have seen them.

It is only natural that the endurance and perseverance of these animals make all of them famous and outstanding, but, perhaps the most famous of all was Balto.

If you take an atlas and look at a map of North America, you will notice that to the far north-west of Canada there is a country called Alaska. It is in this country that Balto was born.

While yet a puppy, he showed signs of unusual strength and courage; and when he was only a few months old he was trained to draw heavy loads on a long sled. Later, harnessed with other dogs, he frequently drew a sled for hundreds of miles over steep and rugged mountains.

The greatest tribute paid a Husky is to make him a "lead" dog—that is, the first dog in a sled team. Within a few years, Balto was selected by his master to occupy this position on long, perilous journeys. However, the world may never have heard of him if a severe epidemic of diphtheria had not broken out in the Alaskan city of Nome.

THE entire supply of antitoxin in that city was soon used, and the doctors sent out desperate calls for more. No aeroplane could approach because of the blizzards, and all hope that the children of the city would be saved dwindled. In a last attempt to overcome the conditions, an appeal was made for the fastest dog team in the country to assist.

Balto's master, Gunnar Kasson, answered the call. On January 27, 1925, serum carefully packed in thousands of little glass bottles on the sled, he had his team ready to set out with Balto in the lead.

Travelling over the frozen shores of the Bering Sea and up over huge humps of ice, the team fought to make good time so that they would not arrive too late to help. Many times Gunnar Kasson felt weak and weary, the intense cold causing him untold pain as it seared his face; but always there was the indomitable spirit of Balto and his twelve followers to keep him going.

After five arduous days, through a blinding storm, the struggling party caught its first glimpse of flickering lights in the distance. It was the city of destination — Nome. They had completed a journey in five days that had never been done before in less than nine days.

Medical men began administering the precious serum immediately, and the people of Nome rejoiced because their children were safe again. Balto, his twelve dog companions, and his brave master were the heroes of the hour.

In December of the same year, a monument was erected in Central Park in New York City. It is a statue of a sled dog standing on a rock, below which is the name BALTO. On the rock is carved a picture of the dog team driven by Gunnar Kasson and the inscription:

"Dedicated to the indomitable spirit of the sled dogs that relayed antitoxin six hundred miles over rough ice, across treacherous water, through Arctic blizzards from Nenana to the relief of stricken Nome in the winter of 1925."

GREYFRIAR'S BOBBY

WE often see stories in the press about dogs who are so struck with grief on their master's death that they maintain a vigilance over some article he used, and can't be moved. Many people are apt to treat these events lightly, arguing that dogs are not capable of experiencing such sorrow. However, stories of the sufferings of bereaved dogs continue.

The story of Greyfriar's Bobby is such a one; it is about a dog who had but one master, and when that person died, he did not seek a new one, but for the rest of his life guarded his grave.

Bobby was a little Skye terrier, who was born away up in Scotland in the big city of Edinburgh, about eighty years ago. He lived on a large estate and was able to romp and play during his puppyhood in the happiest manner. At this time he became attached to Auld Jock, a poor farmer. This elderly man used to work on the estate during the summer season and lived in a crowded slum house in Edinburgh during the winter. When he drove to market or worked in the fields, Bobby was a constant companion, and when he left in the winter, Bobby fretted until the first sign of summer days came again.

Then one fine summer day a large carriage came along the highway, and as it neared the estate Bobby ran out to meet it. A very beautiful and charming lady looked from the window and, of course, as soon as she saw the fluffy puppy she wanted him. So the carriage stopped, the lady got out, and the next minute Auld Jock was holding a crisp one-pound note, while the little dog was sitting contentedly on the seat beside the lady.

As the lady drove away, she called back, "Do you know what I'm calling the wee doggie? I shall call him Bobby, because, like the most famous Scottish poet, Bobby Burns, he has left the plough and is off to Edinburgh."

Bobby must have taken advantage of his name, for not long afterwards Auld Jock caught sight of a speck on the purple horizon. The little dog had agreed with Robert Burns' declaration that auld acquaintance should never be forgotten, and had returned home.

AFTER another two years, Auld Jock's work on the estate terminated. The old man moved to his meagre room in Edinburgh and took Bobby with him. Money grew scarce, and had it not been for the constant friendship of Bobby the old man would not have had the spirit to carry on. Now, instead of their walks under the blue skies and across the heather, they walked amongst the dusty streets and the traffic and the children playing midst rows and rows of dingy houses, and dreamed together. Occasionally they stopped at old Mr. Trail's tavern near Greyfriar's Cemetery, for Mr. Trail was a kindly man and often gave them food.

Then one day the old shepherd took very ill and was later found dead. Little Bobby became one of the few mourners who followed the funeral procession to the cemetery.

A BIG notice on Greyfriar's Cemetery told everybody that dogs were not allowed inside, so a man grabbed Bobby and sent him running down the road, throwing stones at the poor little fellow. But Bobby was a dauntless dog and he was back that night, trying desperately to dig under the gate. His paws were torn and bleeding, but he was a wise dog, and when he realised he couldn't get in that way, he just waited. When someone opened the gate in the morning, he kept close to the wall and slipped cautiously in. He went straight to his master's grave.

He lay there, head on paws, until the caretaker was disturbed by his soft whimpering and came to enquire. The dog was immediately put out. During the next few days he persisted in his visits to the cemetery.

Finally a dog-catcher picked the little fellow up and transported him to the police station. Local people rallied to defend him. His story was told in court. Even the dour Scotch lawyers were touched by the doings of the faithful dog, and Bobby won the case, walking from the court with a new collar, on which was inscribed:

Greyfriar's Bobby, from the Lord Provost — 1867 Licensed.

A few days later, a band of soldiers came through the city, marching to fife and drum, and Bobby trailed them, the music having a peculiar fascination for him. He followed them right up Castle Hill, and then inside the great castle walls themselves. Suddenly the soldiers discovered him. They read his collar, and drank his health. They fussed over him and stroked him. But it was growing dark, and Bobby's eyes became a little sad, remembering his post by his master's grave. Without warning, he ran across the courtyard. There was a heavy fog, and the bewildered little dog was hampered in seeing his way. The soldiers were calling to him in the distance. At the edge of the cliff outside the castle, Bobby leaped into space. He landed on a sharp crag, causing his foot to double up.

Little by little, he dragged himself on, until Mr. Trail, the old tavern-keeper, who was out searching for him with all the local children, found the bedraggled little cripple.

A wealthy English woman heard of his misfortune and travelled all the way up to Scotland to see whether there was anything she could do, but the careful treatment of the old tavern-keeper had made Bobby well again. Before returning to England, the lady arranged for some permanent reminder of Bobby's devotion. Within a few months a sculptor had erected on Candlemaker's Row, opposite the main gateway to the Greyfriar's Kirkyard, a little monument, at the base of which was a drinking fountain. On the top point there was a bronze statue of the little dog.

Bobby's death a little later put an end to a fourteen-year vigil over his master's grave.

Between You and Me

DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

I could not help but smile when I read two letters in this month's mail. One was from a girl who lives on a country property in Western Queensland and the other from one who lives in Sydney. The country lass was saying how difficult life in the country was when you had to milk cows, feed fowls, ride many miles to school, and face terrible droughts and floods. Then, when I read the city Junior's letter I found that she thought country life wonderful, and city life very boring! It made me think. When I was a child I was lucky enough to spend part of my life in the very country in Queensland to which the first girl referred, while I also lived in Sydney for two years. Which, I asked myself as I read these two letters, had I enjoyed the most?

It was one of the most difficult questions I have ever asked myself, but eventually I decided I had had an overwhelming preference for the country life. I wonder how other members feel about it? Perhaps you will write and defend your preference. The arguments would be very interesting, and I might be able to fit portions of them into the pages. I'll be waiting for your opinions.

Love from your friend,

Jennifer

RIDDLES

Why is A a magic letter? (Because it changes a witch into a watch.)

What ship does not sail the sea? (Friendship.)

What letter can be added to one to make one less? (The letter N [n-one].)

(Three marks to **Alison Millard**, 15, 246 Timor St., Warrnambool, Vic.)

What can you see with your eyes shut? (A joke.)

What is the most inquisitive letter in the alphabet? (Y.)

(Two marks to **Joyce Matthews**, 11, 104 Addis St., Kalgoorlie, W.A.)

What is the difference between a new penny and an old sixpence? (Fivepence, of course.)

When is a ship like a dog? (When it is attached to a buoy [boy].)

(Two marks to **Rosemary Sheehan**, 12, 4 Walker St., Donald, Vic.)

Why is it difficult to keep a secret in frosty weather? (Because your teeth will chatter.)

Why did the hall-stand? (Because there was no sitting-room.)

(Two marks to **Dora Morrison**, Charles St., Wycheproof, Vic.)

What is the difference between a schoolmaster and a postage stamp? (One licks with a stick, and the other sticks with a lick.)

Why is it easy to get into a bald man's house? (Because he has few locks.)

Why are some people's heads like bells? (Because there is nothing in them except a tongue.)

(Three marks to **Nancy Williams**, 14, 15 Palmerston St., Ararat, Vic.)

What is the difference between a dog and a story book? (One has its tail outside and the other has its tale inside.)

What bridge cannot be walked upon? (The bridge of your nose.)

(Two marks to **Lynette Aworth**, 71 Turner Ave., Fairfield, Brisbane, Q'ld.)

THE BANK SWALLOW

Like most other swallows, the bank swallow seems to feel that it must have a cavity in which to build its nest, and since usually there is none available to suit its needs, it proceeds to make its own. Using bill and feet, it excavates a horizontal burrow two or three feet long in the side of a sand bank or gravel bed. The extremity of the hole is enlarged and lined with dead grasses.

The birds breed in colonies and often the entrances to their burrows are only a foot or two apart.

(Three marks to **Margaret Bell**, 13, Napier, Albany, W.A.)

MY MICROSCOPE

I bought a microscope in Melbourne six months ago. It makes things a hundred times larger. With it there were some slides three inches long and one inch wide. These are for holding objects while you examine them. There is also a wooden box to hold the microscope and a drawer in which to keep the slides. The microscope has a mirror on it which you adjust to shine through the object. It has two lenses—the smallest is as big as a pea and the other is twice as big. If you look at a drop of blood you can see all the corpuscles. A spider's fang is twice as sharp as a needle. A razor looks like a crosscut saw.

(Four marks to **Geoffrey Monteith**, 10, Mondure, Q'ld.)

THE PRIZE LETTER

DEAR JENNIFER,

Last Saturday my Pop and two men went and robbed a wild bee hive to get some honey. I went, too. We had nets over our hats to keep the bees from stinging us. We cut down the tree first, then cut the honey out of the tree. We got two tins of comb. I got one sting on my hand. The honey is nice to eat.

BARNEY PERCIVALL, (6).

Hill End, via Moe,
Victoria.

A SCRIPTURE CAKE

Have you ever done some cooking from the Scriptures? Let us make that which is found in (1) I Kings 19:6. You will find the necessary articles to use in (2) I Kings 7:50. Now for the ingredients. They are found in (3) Judges 5:25; (4) Jeremiah 6:20; (5) I Chronicles 9:29; (6) Leviticus 2:13; (7) Isaiah 10:14; (8) Judges 4:19; (9) I Samuel 30:12, and (10) I Kings 10:2. After mixing, you can cook it in that which is found in (11) St. Mark's Gospel 14:20. To cook it you must get that which is found in (12) Genesis 6:14; to make that which is found in (13) Leviticus 2:16, and (14) St. Luke's Gospel 11:39 provides you with something to put your cake on when it is cooked.

Use your Bible to decode this recipe. In case you cannot work it out, here are the answers:

(1) Cake; (2) Bowl and Spoon; (3) Butter; (4) Sweet Cane (sugar); (5) Flour; (6) Salt; (7) Eggs; (8) Milk; (9) Raisins; (10) Spices; (11) Dish; (12) Wood; (13) Fire; (14) Platter.

(Five marks to **Terry Matsen**, 9, "The Exchange," Homebush, Mackay, Q'ld.)

RHYMES FROM READERS

NOW WINTER'S HERE

Now winter's here our gloves are out,
We've caps upon our heads,
No going out at night just now,
We're early in our beds.
It seems we just cannot get up
These chilly winter morns,
With nippy breezes blowing strong,
And frost on all the lawns.
There's some who like the winter best,
They think it's simply grand,
But, for myself, I think the spring
The best time in the land.

(Six marks to **Elaine Campbell**, 13, Gardenia Grove, Burleigh Heads, Q'ld.)

THE ANGRY SEA

The waves like lions roar,
Tossing their snowy, shaggy manes
And crash upon the shore;
Flinging the foam far and wide,
Over the swirling, liquid greenness,
Then, in its darkness hide.

(Five marks to **Cherrill Vertigan**, 11, 4 Murray St., Smithton, Tas.)

MY POEM

What could I write for a poem?
I don't know what to do;
I wonder if it could be spring?
No, I'll try something new.

P'rhaps about a river,
Or even a trip to the moon;
I wish someone would tell me,
It's got to be finished soon.

I know I'm not very brainy,
But I think that I know what;
I'll write about my dolly,
Who's outside asleep in the cot.

But, no, for a girl of my age,
I don't think that subject would do;
But I hope what I have written
Will be quite acceptable to you.

(Six marks to **Dorothy Connell**, 14, Upper Castra, via Ulverstone, Tas.)

DID YOU KNOW?

There are 2,425 miles of canals in Great Britain.

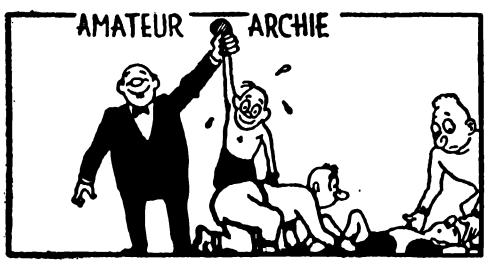
It is said that one pound of honey represents 300,000 miles of travel by the bees that produce it.

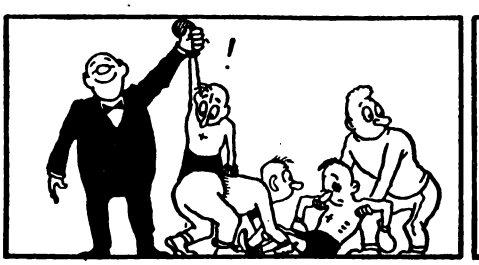
Earthquakes occur more often than we imagine. About 9,000 occur every year. Of these, 5,000 are strong enough to be felt by those on the spot, while on the average, 170 are powerful enough to damage buildings.

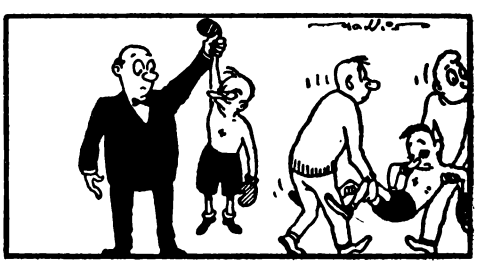
(Three marks to **Esma Guinane**, 11, Bannockburn, Vic.)

That Abraham Lincoln, the American President, was born on a Sunday, elected to office on a Monday, became president on a Tuesday, was admitted to the legal profession on a Wednesday, delivered his famous Gettysburg address on a Thursday, was shot on a Friday, and died on a Saturday.

(Two marks to **Joan Garton**, 15, Cairn Curran, Baringhup, Vic.)







LET'S LAUGH

Teacher: Who first invented underground tunnels?
Star Pupil: Worms, sir!

Mother: Would you like a birthday cake with nine candles on it?
Greedy Bobbie: Yes, but I'd rather nine cakes and one candle.

She: This cookery book is full of mistakes.
He: I know. I've tasted them.

Teacher: Are you going to be an engineer?
Student: Why, sir?
Teacher: Well, you are always making a bolt for the door.
(Four marks to **Joan Garton**, 15, Cairn Curran, Baringhup, Vic.)

"Can you tell me the quickest way to get to the farm, little girl."
"To run, sir," answered Sue, innocently.
(Two marks to **Kay McLennan**, 9, Barramunga, Vic.)

A father and mother took their twins to be christened.
"What names?" asked the clergyman.
"Steak and kidney" answered the nervous father.
"Joe, don't be silly," said the horrified mother. "Kate and Sidney."
(Two marks to **Decima Wright**, 11, Hunter's Springs, via Scone, N.S.W.)

Mrs. Jones: Did the doctor pay a visit?
Mrs. Bills: Yes, and the visit paid the doctor.

A boy reached far across the table for some butter.
Father: Haven't you got a tongue?
Boy: Yes, but my tongue isn't as long as my arm.
(Two marks to **Frieda Stiller**, 12, Box 4, Guluguba, Q'ld.)

Uncle (seeing Tommy hard at work weeding the garden): Ah! I suppose your father has promised you something for doing this?
Tommy: No, but he's promised me something if I don't!

Teacher: Bobby, go to the map on the wall and find North America.
Bobby: Here it is, teacher.
Teacher: Correct Bobby. Now, children, I want you to tell me who discovered America.
Class: Please miss, Bobby did!
(Three marks to **Glenys Fimmell**, 9, 51 Birkett St., Bedford Park, W.A.)

Teacher: What three words are used most by schoolboys?
Boy: I don't know.
Teacher: Quite correct.

Pa: My shaving brush is very stiff to-day. I wonder what has happened to it.
George: I don't know, Pa. It was all right yesterday when I painted the dog's kennel with it.
(Two marks to **Mary Carey**, 90 Mary St., Merrylands, N.S.W.)

"Joe, you look all in to-day. What is the trouble?"
"Well, I didn't get home until after daylight, and I was just undressing when my wife woke up and said, 'Aren't you getting up pretty early?' Rather than start an argument, I just put on my clothes and came down to the office."
(Two marks to **Norma Buettel**, 13, 87 Pleasant St., Maryborough, Q'ld.)

Mistress: Jane, have you swept out that room yet?
Jane: Er, no, madam. I have swept out the dust but the room is still there!
(Two marks to **Joyce Mathews**, 11, 104 Addis St., Kalgoorlie, W.A.)

Little Boy: Mother, it's a good job you named me Donald.
Mother: Why?
Little Boy: Because everyone calls me that.

Lou: My mother has something yours hasn't!
Sue: What?
Lou: Me.
(Two marks to **Louise Field**, 13, Crockers St., Railton, Tas.)

KNOW YOUR MEMBERS.

(Seven marks awarded for each photograph.)

GLENDA SASSE
Coondarra, Gippsland, Vic.

Age: Fourteen.
Hobbies: Dancing, photography and reading.
Favourite books: The "Anne" series.
Favourite sport: Tennis.
Ambition: To travel to America.

DENIS KUNST
"Greenwood," Miva, Q'ld.

Age: Twelve.
Hobbies: Fishing and reading.
Favourite book: "The Runswick Treasure," by George Norman.
Favourite subject at school: Mensuration.
Favourite sport: Cricket.
Ambition: To learn a trade.

LENORE MARTIN
Ross Glade, Kumbarilla, via Dalby, Q'ld.

Age: Nine.
Hobbies: Knitting and gardening.
Favourite book: "Black Beauty."
Favourite sport: Tennis.
Ambition: To be a nurse.

TASMANIAN CAVES

Unknown to many people, there are caves of great beauty and quality to be found in Tasmania. The Tasmanian limestone caves stretch from Burnie to the Tamar River in the north. There is also a small area around the Hastings Caves, near Hobart. At present there are four caves in Tasmania which are open to tourists. They are the Hastings Caves, King Solomon's, Marrakoopa and Gunn's Plains Caves. Well placed and often concealed lights illuminate the caves.

Stalactites are formations hanging from the roof and stalagmites rise from the floor. When two meet they form a column known as an organ pipe. When struck these columns have a deep booming note. The sound varies with the length of the column. It is estimated that formations grow one inch in one thousand years, so some columns in Tasmania must have been growing for centuries as some are ten feet and over. One, fourteen feet long, in the Hastings Cave, claims the world's record. The straw stalactites are so fragile that even the chatter of a large party may dislodge them. The water that runs through the caves is highly mineralised. The temperature in the caves never varies from a fixed degree.

(Five marks to **Barbara O'Shea**, 13, Highland Hills, P/te. Bag, Wynyard, Tas.)

COMPETITION SPOT.

Everyone should find this month's competitions very easy, and have no difficulty in earning the cash prizes and marks awarded for the correct entries.

SENIORS (Twelve and Over)

Answers to the phrases below all begin with the three letters W A R. Example: A prison keeper—*War*der.

1. An Australian shrub.
2. A hard growth on the skin.
3. To put on guard.
4. To sing with trills.
5. A receptacle for clothes.

JUNIORS (Under Twelve)

By inserting the letter "N" ten times in the following row of letters you will be able to complete ten girls' names:

JEAMOADIAAORAJOAGWELEAEDASUSAHELE

(Five marks to **Louise Field** for this idea.)

Send entries to Jennifer, P.O. Box 2809AA, Melbourne.

MAY RESULTS

SENIORS

Cash prizes awarded to: Wendy Bridge, 12, Box 75, P.O., Moree, N.S.W.; **Marie MacVean**, 14, "Glenburn," Ladysmith, via Wagga, N.S.W.; **Patricia Eade**, 13, Railway St., Teralba, N.S.W.; **Bernice Jackson**, 13, Moore St., Colac, Vic.; **Cyril Tresize**, 13, Barwidgee Creek, via Myrtleford, Vic.; **Hazel Renfree**, 13, 31 Forrest Ave., Bunbury, W.A.; **Judith Woodcock**, 12, Dunolly, Leadville, N.S.W.; **Therese Sheehan**, 13, 4 Walker St., Donald, Vic.

Three marks awarded to: Carmel Letheby, Mavis Morgan, Gwendoline Ridden, Gladys Lawson, Stephen Ferrier, Elaine Nielsen, Gwenda Quinn, Janice Pearce, Janice Chilcott, Bert Cail, Bill Martin.

JUNIORS

Cash prizes awarded to: Glenys Liddelow, 9, 28 Newcastle Rd., Midland Junction, W.A.; **Geoffrey Monteith**, 10, Mondure, Q'ld.; **Anne Koellner**, 11, Gundary, Moruya, N.S.W.; **Kenneth Chilcott**, 8, North Motton, via Ulverstone, Tas.; **Graham Swan**, 10, 28 Bundoran Pde., Box Hill North, Vic.; **Nola Tanner**, 11, 18 Gardner Ave., West Croydon, S.A.; **Harry Went**, 7, Wilga, W.A.; **Iris Christensen**, 11, R.M.B. 755, Afterlee, via Kyogle, N.S.W.

Three marks awarded to: Richard Wilson, Delphine Bailye, Yvonne Copeman, Shirley Sawdy, Beryl Burkinshaw, Evelyn Sutcliffe, Donald Harrison, Raymond Jones, Des Wimberley, Iris Eade, Beth Tait, Wilma Mason, Patricia Dolan, Lynette Francis, Alan Bruce, Eric Golding, Margaret Drury, Vivien Holt, Virginia Chapple, Beverley Dann, Maureen Barwise, Jean Laing, Ray Long, Sheila Murphy.

IN MY MAIL.

New Members: Shirley Rowley, Bill Hayhurst, David Wisbey, Helen Wells, Pamela McAuliffe, Lenore and Evelyn Martin, Margaret Purcell, Beverley and Carol McGrath, Dorothy Rodgers, Anne McNally, Eileen Parks, Helen Ferres, Isabelle Hullard, Joy Rothque, Daryl Dixon, Mary Trebley, Marie Halsbisch, Marlene Poggiolo, Beth Knowles, Kath Hayles, Alan Edwards, Jennifer Ruediger, Carolyn Butterworth, Bill Rixon, Vivien Holt, Pat Lovelock, John Bowe, Sheila Murphy, Pam Gleeson, John and Terry Kelso, J. Cameron, Helen Lakeman, Pamela McCarthy, B. Martin, Madge Spillane, Beryl McNally, Mona Sinclair, Veronica Sheehan, Rosemary Sheehan, Margaret Laverty, Elaine Skervers, K. Chilcott, Wendy Mousdale, Dorothy Ward, June Gavin, R. Williams, Gwen Matthews, Patricia Robbie, L. Acworth, Gwen and Bill Martin, Patricia Hennessey, Michael Heywood, Noela Davey, Walter Kentwell, Merle Boyle, Anne Willis, Janet Opie, Raymond Jones, Judith Woodcock, Judith Page, Patricia Dolan, Dawn Reynolds, Ron Graham, Margaret Kelly, Margaret Fleming, Beverley Nagel, Judith Day, Eric Golding, Wendy Goodwin, Colin Pannan, Irene Hammond, Jennifer Foster, Des Wimberely, Merlene Hammond, Donald Harvey, John Dennis, Anne and Margaret Koellner, Kay Harvey, Lynette Wilcock, M. Burr, Julienne Emery, Teddy Bloomfield, Roy McLines, C. Cummings, Shirley Keft, Patricia Adam, Patricia Eade, Iris Eade, Mirene Attenborough, Kathleen Wittmann, Elaine Nielsen, Josephine Cranny, Iris Christensen, June Williams, N. Skellen, Pat Sutherland, Daphne Mitchell, Rae Gray, Marjorie Weldon, Shirley Sawdy, Valerie James, Pam Nielsen, Juliana Twartz.

NOTE FOR NEW MEMBERS.

Apply to Jennifer, P.O. Box 2809AA, Melbourne, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope for Membership Rules and Mark Book.

PASTIMES

THRIFT CRAFTS

In most households many useful items are thrown away, the possibility of making things from them not being realised. Pots, cardboard, odd scraps of material—there is a use for everything, and very attractive articles can be made for practically nothing if you are willing to give a little time to thinking them out. You will find that such products will be eagerly sought to sell at bazaars, and it will be an admirable way for you to do your share towards helping local charities. The following suggestions should encourage you to make a start, and will perhaps lead you on to using your own ingenuity and evolving many others for yourselves.

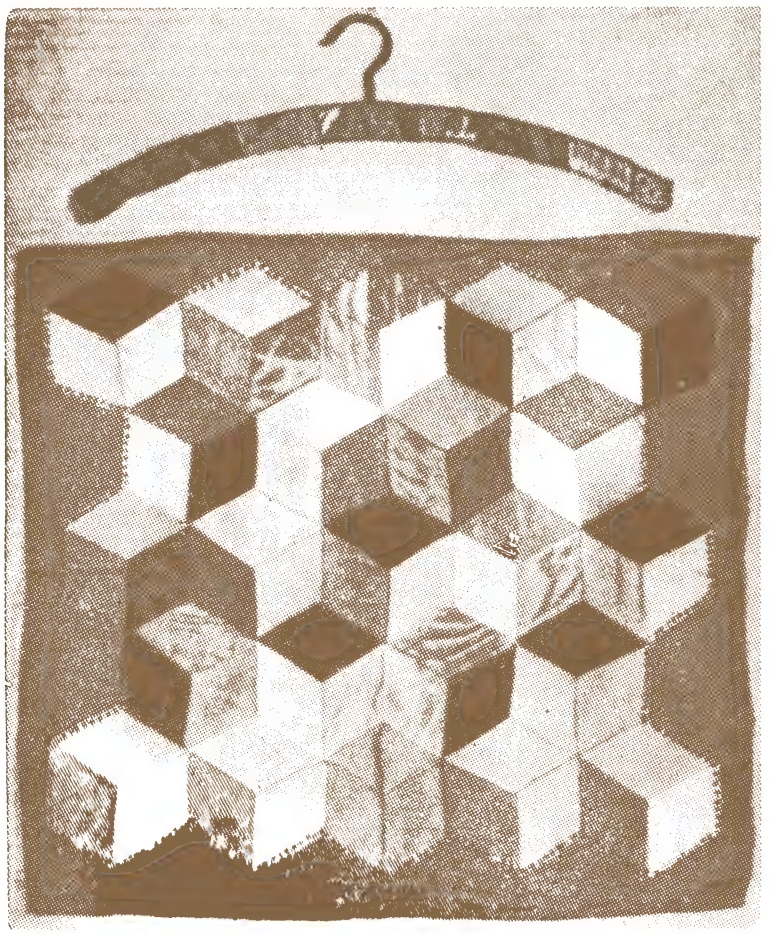
AN ARMCHAIR WORK-BOX

This is made from an ordinary cardboard box — though one which has a straight side capable of being attached to a chair is preferable. With cretonne or a similar material you cover the inside of the box, shaping the odd ends over the outside, and sewing in the corners of the cardboard to prevent them sticking up. Next, cover the outside and put a braid or trimming round the edges as a finish. Buy half a yard of ribbon about an inch wide, and sew one end of it to the straight side of the box; make a pocket at the other end and sew in some pennies or leaden weights. By placing the weighted end in the crease of a chair and allowing the ribbon to stretch over the arm, you will find that the box hangs quite firmly beside the chair, allowing a person to keep knitting, sewing or magazines handy during winter evenings.

HAT-BOXES

Hat-boxes, though useful, are very ugly about the rooms. Here is an idea for making them beautiful at very little cost. Cover the hat-box inside and out with material, slip-stitching it neatly along the top edges. Cover the lid of the box on the outside, sewing a small china doll (such as you will find on an old tea-pot cosy) to the material in the top centre of the lid. Add the lining to the inside lid. Make a crinoline skirt by gathering a straight piece of soft material into the doll's waist and let it hang slightly over the box when the lid is in place. A ribbon round the waist of the doll, and a little trimming to act as a bodice, will complete the box.

Very large boxes can be covered in the same manner, and instead of giving an untidy air to a room they will provide attractive decorations, at the same time holding those numerous small items you can never fit anywhere.



This illustration shows a dress-hanger and a cushion cover done in patchwork.

PATCHWORK

This is the most fascinating thrift craft, as even the tiniest scraps of material can be utilised.

Dresshanger.

Take a piece of calico or stiff material, eighteen inches long by three inches wide, and cover it with small pieces of silky material, sewing them to it securely and outlining each piece with feather-stitching. Next, obtain an ordinary dresshanger and cover the hook with twisted ribbon. Make a hole in the exact middle of the covered calico to allow the hook of the hanger to go through; push it through, and draw the hole together so as to make it neat. Slip-stitch the two long sides together over the wooden hanger: do the same for the ends, and the hanger is now ready for use. (See illustration.)

Cushion.

Colourful and unusual cushions can be made from patchwork, but they require much more material than smaller items. Firstly, you need two large pieces of plain material, each the size of the required cushion. Next gather scraps and cut them into diamond shapes, matching them with diamonds cut from brown paper. Three of these placed together form a "box" pattern (consult illustration). Sew sufficient boxes together on the foundation of paper patterns to cover the outside of the background material, leaving a narrow margin all round. When you have completed the patchwork, slip the paper out. Sew the designed patchwork on the background material, outlining it with either beads, sequins or fancy stitches. Treat the other side in the same way. Sew up three sides of the cover, and place dress studs on the other end so that it is easy to place a cushion in it.

The Australian Journal
PATTERN SERVICE

1345: Favourite shirt style with full front from well-fitting yoked shoulders. Sleeves may be wrist-tight with buttoned cuffs or short and plain. Five sizes, 32-40" bust. Price, **2/4.**

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"THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL" PATTERN SERVICE,
Box 2809 AA, G.P.O., Melbourne, C.1.

A FLOWER IN THE JUNGLE

(Continued from page 72)

you're not back soon. And I really mean that."

They waited ten minutes after he had driven off. A bullock cart waddled by, heavy with coconuts, and they bought a couple. The driver, with a few slashes of his knife, tore off the husks and opened holes at the end for them to drink the milk.

He had gone and Oliver, without a knife, was trying to smash the two nuts together to get at the meat, when Randy drove up.

"So you turned up after all!" he roared from the car window. "After my behaviour on Friday night I wondered whether I'd scared you off the whole business. Jump in."

"Aren't we going into the drome?"

"No. I often use this as a rendezvous, because there's something respectable about 'Dum Dum Airport.' How did you get out here?"

"Friend drove us; fellow called Barrington-Smith."

"Never heard of him. Anyway, he'll go and tell all his friends that he left you at Dum Dum, and no one will think anything of it. If he found out you were flying a 'plane off a jungle clearing he'd have the makings of a good story—which might subsequently embarrass us all."

"Supposing he'd waited here with us until you arrived?"

"Oh, we'd have got rid of him somehow or other."

They drove off along the Barrackpore Road, heading north. After about a mile the car turned off to the right. The road here was scarcely more than a track, passing through the centre of a village. Little brown-skinned children, naked as lizards, screamed at them and ran along behind the car.

The jungle about them was dense and tropical, with thick banana fronds hanging down across the road and a network of vines blocking out the sun. In a few minutes, however, they were out of it and speeding along between paddy fields. They turned off again along the bund between two paddies, passed through another little strip of jungle and came to a halt. A few yards away was an ex-Army 15 cwt. truck loaded with petrol tins. Above their heads floated a red windsock on a pole.

"Perfect this time of year," said Randy, opening the car door. "This is as good a

rass strip as you'll find anywhere."

"And this is it? Your rivate airport?"

"This is one of them—the nly one near Calcutta."

The Indian driver of the etrol truck was spreading a hite cloth "T" on the grass, howing the direction of takeff and landing.

"Can you hear it, Moti al?"

Moti Lal pointed. *"Ji, hazur, unta. Wuh bahut nazdik hai."*

The Dakota was just visible ver the jungle, a mile or two ff and losing height rapidly.

"Where's it from, Randy?"

"Middle East. I don't supose those two lads'll be sorry o get down on the deck. Tel viv to Calcutta's quite a rip."

"And where did the kite ome from originally?"

"God knows. I'm only conerned with getting it through ere and up to China. This ilot and navigator took it ver at Tel Aviv three days go, and they probably don't now any more about it than do. They get paid for a elivery to this map reference, nd that's that."

"Wouldn't they take it on o China?"

"No. They've got to get ack to the Middle East—ast."

The Dakota roared over heir heads at fifty feet, then limbed rapidly over the trees t the far end. Wheels began o bud from the fuselage and few seconds later the flaps ame down. It completed a ircuit at about three hundred eet and the pilot dropped it n, just clear of the trees at heir end; it trundled down he strip, brakes screaming.

"All very spectacular," said Randy bitterly, "but there's lenty of room on this strip or a normal landing. Two niles an hour slower, and e'd have stalled the damn hing into the trees."

The aircraft swung round t the far end of the field, axied back, and the pilot cut is engines. He waved heerily at them through the ockpit window and a moment ater he and the navigator ad jumped down on the rass.

"Well, well. So this is the lace! We damn near ignored our maps and put her down t Dum Dum. Still, I guess hat woulda loused you guys p—or would it?"

"Yes, yes," said Randy. 'My name's Ranjit Singh. You'd have embarrassed us all, just a little bit, if you'd landed at Dum Dum even though it does look nicer. These two gentlemen, Mr. Lyle and Mr. Sturgess, will be taking her on when she's refuelled. Any trouble on the trip?"

"Not a thing. Our only trouble was getting gas. Those guys back at Nagpur, they're slow. Took us four hours to get a hundred gallons in—and no food either. By the way, I'm Meredith, Dick Meredith; and this is my navigator, Phil Parsons. Good Texans both."

He shook hands with all of them, a stocky little man, thirtyish, red-haired, and built like a bullock. Parsons, rather younger, was tall, willowy and splashed with pimples, sporting a layer of thickly greased black hair and a pair of side-burns.

Oliver turned to Randy. "Look; what would you have done if you hadn't got us for this trip? Who'd have taken it on to Finjan?"

Randy laughed.

"I'd have booked up Michael, or got a couple of other fellows out of hiding. We often leave aircraft in this little bit of jungle for a week or more."

Chris had climbed into the fuselage and up into the cockpit. Things hadn't changed, thank God, since his last trip at the controls of a Dak. Same old knobs and dials.

Moti Lal clambered up on the starboard wing and started, laboriously, pouring 100-octane petrol into the tanks. Oliver had now climbed up into the cockpit.

"What do you think of it? Can we get there?"

"Suppose so. Seems all right. We've even got two parachutes." Chris leaned out of the window. "These chutes yours, or do they go with the aircraft?"

"They're all yours, fella. Hope you won't need 'em."

In twenty minutes the wing tanks were full and they were ready for take-off. Chris taxied her slowly back to the end of the strip and swung round on a braked wheel with the tail hard up against the trees. Oliver, behind in the navigator's cubicle, was checking the marked map which Randy, only five minutes before, had thrust into his hands. Not a vestige of navigational data or maps remained from the aircraft's Middle East hop. Meredith and Parsons had removed all trace of their occupancy. And, if they obeyed Randy's injunction, so would they, on landing.

Chris ran each engine up in turn and checked magnetos. Waves of sound flooded into the cockpit, as the whole aircraft shivered and groaned against the brakes.

"All set, Ollie?"

"Yes. Compass 37 degrees. Let's try it at 10,000."

"O.K. Here we go."

Chris waved at the four figures standing together under the trees, eased the brakes, and they rolled forward. The figures outside waved half-heartedly; their interest, quite impersonal, was centered on the aircraft, and not its occupants.

They gained speed over the bumpy grass; the tail rose, and with a slight backward pressure on the stick he pulled the machine off the ground. Funny, how easy it all was. The trees which had worried him shot past fifty feet below, green hands which reached up, clawed impotently, and fell away behind them. He throttled back, undid his safety belt and wriggled out of an uncomfortable, moist patch of seat. With his handkerchief he wiped the throttle levers, then the palms of both hands. It was a hell of a long time since those hands, clammy with fear, had sweated tell-tale marks on the controls. Yes, he realised; he'd been scared—scared stiff.

What a damn fool he was, for being scared in the first place; and for embarking on the trip at all. He swallowed.

Oliver came up into the cockpit and patted him on the head, then looked at his own hand. "Bit damp!"

Chris grinned.

"Never mind," Oliver roared. "I've just been mopping myself. Damn good takeoff. No more panic until we try and get down at Finjan—if I can find the way."

They flew back over the strip and set course. The four others, their duty discharged, had left, and there was nothing to show that the field had ever been used for anything more interesting than cattle.

They climbed, heading northeast. The lush green of Bengal seemed to change colour as they rose. As the leaves and branches of the trees merged together, so they formed a carpet of a lighter green. Other colours appeared. To their left was the yellow-brown of the Hooghly River, oozing southward to the sea, while to their right and behind them, a dozen miles away, lay the grey, shapeless mass of Calcutta. For a moment everything was blotted out as they entered a cloud; then they were skimming along over its surface, still climbing.

At 10,000 feet, they levelled out. They'd been a bit out on their first pin-point; the road and river intersection Oliver had taken off the map was farther to starboard than it should have been, and they altered course two degrees in that direction.

Two hours later they crossed the Brahmaputra. Ten thousand feet below, the huge stream wound by like a narrow, silver ribbon. Tile mile upon mile of paddy gave way now to small hills, bristling with a browner, denser vegetation. Many miles to their right these little hills, without any warning, reared themselves up into mountains, brown and jagged against the sky.

END OF PART ONE.

Part Two will appear next month.

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IN PASSING

(Continued from page 3)

liver them in grave and serious manner."

In an age of tyranny, James Stuart was an unusually democratic monarch. Like every other king of his time, he naturally believed in the Divine Right of the throne, but on the other hand, he regarded himself as the father of his people, and endeavoured to promote their happiness as far as it lay in his power.

James was a very odd phenomenon for those times—a king who loved peace. He detested military adventures, and much preferred the society of scholars and philosophers to that of soldiers. "A king," he wrote, "ought to be the preserver of his people, as well of their fortunes as lives, and not a destroyer of his subjects. Were I to make such a war as the King of France doth . . . I would put myself in a monastery all my days after, and repent me that I had brought my subjects to such misery."

Among the notable writers who managed to take an unprejudiced view of this maligned king is Isaac Disraeli, father of the brilliant Benjamin. "Had the genius of James the First been warlike," he says, "had he commanded a battle to be fought and a victory to be celebrated, popular historians, the panders of ambition, had adorned their pages with bloody trophies; but the peace the monarch cultivated, the wisdom which dictated his plan of civilisation, and the persevering arts which put it into practice—these are the still virtues which give no notion to the spectacle of the historian, and are even forgotten in his pages."

Obviously, like many other people, James Stuart was not so black as he has been painted!

Desperate Measures.

In our time we have received all kinds of letters from all sorts of authors, but none so grim as one which recently crashed into the mailbox of a prominent Melbourne literary man. It was from a lady, asking for help in getting her work published, and it concluded on this sombre note: "If I do not see some of my work in print soon, I shall take my own life!"

Most of our more violent correspondents have merely threatened to take the Editor's life, which, of course, is a quick and easy way of hitting the headlines. Our literary friend looked rather worried when he read this communication, but we assured him that the percentage of unsuccessful authors who commit hara-kiri is so low that it can be disregarded.

We well remember, however, an interview with an artist who seemed so bent on self-destruction that he could talk of nothing else. There appeared no particular reason why he should go to such an irrevocable extreme, but we humoured him by agreeing that there seemed to be no other way out, and finally having assured him that we were in complete sympathy with his dismal ambition, we opened a drawer and handed him a tablet.

"Take this," we urged, "and end it all here and now. Don't put up with your miserable existence a moment longer. It isn't worth it."

"What is it?" he asked hoarsely, eyeing the tablet askance.

"Cyanide of potassium, of course," we explained. "Come on, swallow it down. It's practically instantaneous. In five minutes, your troubles will be over."

Never was tablet so quickly dropped. It fell from his hand as if it had been red-hot, and our suicidal friend was out of the office door and away in thirty seconds. As for the tablet, we retrieved it and took it to relieve the headache brought on by the interview. Yes, you've guessed it; it was merely aspirin. But the cure was complete; from that day to this, that particular artist has never mentioned suicide again.

"The Etruscan."

The Bank of New South Wales has many things to be proud of, and not the least of them is the quarterly staff magazine, "The Etruscan," quite the best publication of its kind we have yet seen. Traditionally, bankers are hard-headed business men, but so large an organisation as the "Wales" naturally contains many people of literary and artistic talents, so that the editors of "The Etruscan" probably found making a selection the hardest part of their job. They have succeeded admirably in combining technical and general interest, for the magazine is a pleasure to read and handle, and the layout and pictorial side is beyond criticism. The general contents of "The Etruscan" is of so high a standard that this reviewer, whose knowledge of banking is as limited as the amount in his current account, found it interesting all the way through.

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Mainly for Contributors

N.S.: "It was nothing, really, to make a fuss about. All she did was throw a suit of her husband's clothes out of the window . . ."—But perhaps he was in the suit. **W.S.:** "It was strange. They called him everything they could think of — crook, rotter, skunk, louse, swine, and everything—but Hunter just stood there and smiled . . .."—Perhaps he'd been a football umpire. **S.D.:** "That night he came home drunk and fell asleep as soon as he hit the bed . . ."—All right as long as he didn't miss it.

"It's an excellent story, Ogleby, but I'm afraid it's been done before."

M.B.: "'I wouldn't accept the Prime Ministership if it were offered to me,' declared Moyston loftily . . ."—He was quite right. There wouldn't be any chance of advancement in that job. **R.S.:** "He promised to mend his ways, but there was nothing to show that he'd done it . . ."—Invisible mending? **M.S.** "The secret of life is to eat correctly . . ."—The secret of life is to eat at all. **S.C.D.:** "'You're driving me to the grave,' said Thacker, goaded to fury . . ."—He could scarcely expect to walk there.

N.M.: Couldn't quite follow the economics: "He saved half of everything he earned, except when he didn't earn that much." **T.C.:** "Tom took her out on Saturday night, but only spent five shillings on her . . ."—Perhaps that was all she had. **T.N.:** "Have you ever tried counting sheep as a cure for insomnia? . . ."—We did once, but by the time we'd counted 10,000, trucked them to market, sold them and worked out how much we'd made on the deal, it was time to get up.

W.A.S.: "When Hayes lost his money, half his friends didn't know him any longer . . ."—And the other half hadn't heard that he'd lost it. **L.N.:** "McAndrew was only half Scotch . . ."—The other half, apparently, being soda. **R.B.:** "Peter had started out looking for an opening in life . . ."—Yes, and look at the hole he got himself into. **T.I.:** "Captain Hardcastle of H.M.A.S. *Spartan* was not the man to let grass grow under his feet . . ."—Unless it was sea-grass. **D.P.:** "The Pigeon" proved to be a homer.

A.L.: "'Oh, oh, oh, oh!' cried Eve. 'Oh, what shall I do? Oh, where shall I go? Tom, my Tom! What shall I do? Tom? Tom?' . . ."—Sounds as if he was the piper's son. **S.R.:** "Returning home, Mrs. Digby had a torpid bath before dressing to go to the party . . ."—Scarcely the best way to liven herself up. **W.K.:** "At last Terry decided to go out and get himself a job . . ."—Isn't it terrible what some people will do for money?

S.M.G.: "'I don't want you to go to that party,' said Mrs. Markey. 'It'll be far too wild for a young girl . . ."—No party can be called wild until someone tries to play the pancakes on the gramophone. **T.H.:** "'At the end of the second round,' explained Muggridge, 'you hit me and I'll go down for the count' . . ."—Surely they could let it go for five rounds, so as not to cheat the public! **C.S.C.:** "Rhodes felt hungry enough to eat a horse . . ."—He should have gone to the restaurant where we have lunch.

B.F.: "He was about ninety years old, and had lived on a farm all his life, but of late his health had been failing . . ." — Evidently country life didn't agree with him. **N.M.:** "To his horror, Hoskins saw that there were about thirty casualties in the paper . . ."—We once saw about two hundred casualties in a paper. But that was a flypaper. **W.R.:** "Her husband came out of gaol on his birthday . . ."—No doubt she wished him many happy returns.

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R.R.: "Mrs. Day picked all her husband's clothes . . ."—Including the pockets? **M.O.:** "The bank manager suggested that she and her husband start a joint account, but she did not know what that meant . . ."—It meant that her husband put the money in and she took it out. **A.D.H.:** "Detective Hadow was not the sort of man to waste his time, so that Constable Widders wondered what he was up to when he saw him sitting in a restaurant gossiping with the waitress . . ."—Obviously he was playing for a big steak.

M.K.: "He objected to her clothes, her friends and her singing. Then he married another girl, and she decided to have nothing more to do with him . . ."—About time, we should imagine. **J.L.:** "'You low heel!' she hissed. 'You don't even know what love is' . . ."—It's generally the last word in a telegram. **S.M.:** "Crime doesn't pay . . ."—Perhaps not, but you are your own boss.

C.B.: "In the East, Mohammedans stand in the street and pray . . ."—In Melbourne, so do the pedestrians. **R.K.:** "It is remarkable to think that the animals went on board Noah's ark in pairs . . ."—Except the codlin moths. They went in apples. **C.D.:** "He was in doubt whether he would kiss Meg or not . . ."—Should have given her the benefit of the doubt. **N.T.:** "When Sammy was in the right mood, he thought she looked beautiful . . ."—When we're in the right mood, everything looks beautiful!

T.P.: You say you owe your gift of writing to your grandmother?—Why not send her a box of chocolates and square the account? **W.M.:** Story about the osteopath needed a new twist. **R.I.:** "No one really knew why Janet was so popular . . ."—It might have been because she'd won a popularity contest. **R.R.:** "George's grandfather had been a bushranger . . ."—That would account for him being so highly strung.

M.T.O.: "Silhouetted against the dim light from the bedroom window he saw the sinister figure of a man with an open razor in his hand. Nevertheless he remained cool . . ."—We'd have been positively shivering. **M.N.A.:** "He soon developed the knack of relaxing and going to sleep at any time simply by concentrating on it . . ."—A triumph of mind over mattress. **R.W.C.:** "It was odd to see them standing there together eating hamburgers—Price and Dickson—two men who had nothing whatever in common with each other . . ."—Except, possibly, indigestion.

D.I.: "She ripped a handful of hair from Dick's head . . ."—Must have wanted to put it in a locket. **F.I.G.:** "In order to settle the matter, Freeman took his wife apart . . ."—But suppose he had been unable to reassemble her? **G.H.T.:** "It irritated him to see her trying to drive in a nail with the back of a hair brush. 'Why on earth don't you use your head?' he asked . . ."—And then the argument started.

T.L.: "Street had not spoken to his wife for nearly three years . . ."—Still, there was no need for him to give up heart. His turn would come. **D.Y.:** "The whole art of telling a story consists in knowing what to leave unsaid . . ."—It doesn't make much difference, old man. Your wife will find out, anyhow. **R.N.:** 'Some people tie a piece of string around their finger to help them remember . . ."—Yes, and others tie a rope around their neck to help them forget.

W.R.T.: "It took Marsden ten years to discover that he had absolutely no talent for movie acting . . ."—And by then, of course, he was famous. **T.E.R.:** Yes, we realise that we nearly accepted a story from you last year, but we've had twelve months more experience since then. **D.O.:** If you feel you must write works of fiction, stick to making out income tax returns. **B.G.:** There's no need to call your hero "Adam" because you're writing in the first person.

P.A.: The only thing that would put a finishing touch to your story is a match. **B.N.D.:** The outstanding Australian novel of the century has not only been written, it's been rejected. **F.M.:** Yes, there's quite a chance of you eventually seeing your serial in this magazine. After all, we can't live for ever. **T.S.T.:** So you write a story over the week-end and think nothing of it! Neither de we. **L.O.M.:** If you write to kill time, you've certainly chosen a deadly weapon.

P.R.: "'Now, boy,' said the Judge impressively, 'do you know what happens if you don't tell the truth in court?'"—You generally win the case. **F.D.:** "There was no means of telling whether the witness was lying or not . . ."—It's easy to tell when some men are lying. They are if their lips are moving. **M.J.:** "Everything Mrs. Everleigh heard went in at one ear and out at the other . . ."—Everything some women hear goes in at one ear and over the back fence.

V.G.: "'It's odd,' said Simpson, 'that women seem to live much longer than men' . . ."—It's not odd at all. Paint is a good preservative. **J.B.H.:** "He wandered about all night looking for a good place to shoot himself . . ."—Through the heart is regarded as effective. **J.K.:** "When he looked in the mirror and saw how terrible he looked with a beard, he decided to shave it off . . ."—Last time we looked in a mirror and saw how terrible we looked, we practically decided to grow a beard.

D.P.: "He always told his patients to play golf for their health . . ."—And if they already played, he'd tell them to stop. **P.H.:** "Thomson broke down in health and had to sell out his barber's shop . . ."—Too much head-work. **C.H.R.:** "Baker asked the doctor what he had better do to ensure living to a green old age . . ."—Become someone's rich relative. **M.Y.:** "Phillips cursed the day he was born . . ."—Precocious lad. We were four years old before we learned.

H.C.: "Cigarettes were his craving. He could smoke any given number . . ."—Yes, we know men like that. **Y.S.:** "'Look here,' cried Wainwright. 'I earn good money, but yet we don't save anything. I can't understand it' . . ."—Perhaps the neighbours were always doing something they couldn't afford. **W.N.:** "'Oh,' said Mrs. Amberton bitterly, 'Paul is so mean that he only takes me out once a year' . . ."—We once knew a man so mean that all he ever took out were his dentures.

G.E.: "We know all about the seven ages of man, but what are the seven ages of women? . . ."—Her own and half a dozen guesses. **M.A.:** "Priscilla decided not to marry until she was thirty . . ."—Some women decide not to be thirty until they are married. **P.I.:** "Mr. Godfrey got up next morning feeling like a two-year-old . . ."—Horse or egg? **T.H.:** "He claimed that the secret of long life lay in eating plenty of onions . . ."—Hard to keep that a secret.

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